

## APPLICATION

### Study field "Religion and Theology" for assessment

Study field	<i>Religion and Theology</i>
Title of the higher education institution	<i>NODIBINĀJUMS LATERĀNA PONTIFIKĀLĀS UNIVERSITĀTES FILIĀLE RĪGAS AUGSTĀKAIS RELIĢIJAS ZINĀTŅU INSTITŪTS</i>
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# **Self-evaluation report**

Study field "Religion and Theology"

Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran  
University

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# 1. Information on the Higher Education Institution/College

## 1.1. Basic information on the higher education institution/ college and its strategic development fields,.

The Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences (hereinafter referred to as RARZI) is affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University and was established by the [Bishops' Conference of Latvia](#) (available only in Latvian) on the grounds of the [international agreement the Concordat](#) (available only in Latvian) between the Republic of Latvia and the Holy See.

The [Pontifical Lateran University](#) (hereinafter referred to as the PLU) is a Catholic university located Rome and functioning under the direct supervision of the Holy See, hence it is also called the University of the Pope. Its Grand Chancellor is the Vicar General of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome. The PLU was established by Pope Clement XIV in 1773, and since then it has the Faculty of Philosophy, the Faculty of Theology, the Faculty of Canon Law and the Faculty of Civil Law. Later, the Faculty of Peace Sciences and the Pastoral Institute were established. There are approximately 4000 students from 105 countries studying at the PLU, and professors from 20 countries are teaching the PLU. There are 39 institutes established around the world, including RARZI, which are affiliated to the PLU.

RARZI was established on 6 June 2000. The Bishops' Conference of Latvia is responsible for its activity and development. Every five years, RARZI undergoes accreditation by the PLU and the [Dicastery for Culture and Education](#). RARZI was accredited in the Republic of Latvia in 2005.

RARZI is connected to the [Faculty of Theology of the PLU](#), (information available in Latvian) which is located in Rome and guarantees the academic level of RARZI and eligibility for achieving its goals to the Dicastery for Culture and Education. RARZI and other Catholic universities and institutes around the world are guided by the Pope Francis' Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* (the joy of truth) on [Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties](#).

The study field of RARZI is based on tradition of philosophical and theological anthropology, which offers comprehensive explanation of an individual and the society, as well as reveals fundamental values, which enable realisation of the potential of human nature. Studies in humanities and social sciences, such as theology, philosophy, ethics, psychology, pedagogy, social studies, history of culture and religion, are subordinated to this anthropological idea. Their goal is to facilitate a dialogue between the Church and culture, thus improving the balance of ethical and cultural values in the society.

The mission, vision and values of RARZI are based on the principle of European Christian humanism.

**Mission.** Formation and education of an integral person

- on the grounds of tradition of Christian theological and philosophical anthropology;
- through realisation of the ideal of Christian humanism outlined in Revelation, teaching of the Church and Catholic academic tradition;
- by developing comprehensive view on human being and the society;
- by contributing to enlivening of ideals of Christian humanism in Latvian society and culture.

**Vision.**

- A space for everyone to educate their mind and heart.

- An environment for learning meaningful principles of life based on truth and neighbourly love, and learning to apply them in professional life.

### Values.

- Development towards the excellence of an individual.
- Harmony between faith and mind.
- Cooperation and interdisciplinarity.
- Dialogue and openness.
- Individual freedom.

RARZI offers studies in one study field, namely, Religion and Theology, and two study programmes (see Table 1).

Table 1.1.1

*Study field implemented by RARZI, period of accreditation, number of study programmes*

<b>Study field</b>	<b>Study programmes</b>	<b>Period of accreditation</b>
<b>Religion and Theology</b>	1. Academic bachelor's study programme "Religion" (title promoted for accreditation "Religion and Theology"); awarded degree – bachelor's degree of humanities in religion and theology (study programme code: 43221)	26.06.2013 -31.12.2023
	2. Professional master's study programme "Religion" (title promoted for accreditation "Religion and Theology"); awarded degree/ professional qualification master's degree in religion and theology and professional qualification of pastoral counsellor (study programme code: 47221)	

The [Riga Institute of Theology](#) (available only in Latvian) (hereinafter referred to as the RIT) and RARZI are the only higher education institutions in Latvia, which offer studies in Catholic theology and specialisation in pastoral counselling. Studies at RARZI are held as part-time onsite studies which enable students from the entire Latvia to study on weekends. Experience shows that applicants of RARZI are people with strong motivation and personal maturity who have already graduated from another higher education institution. Graduates of RARZI become pastoral counsellors or chaplains in hospitals, army, crisis and psychological counselling centres, prisons and other social institutions, as well as they become catechists in parishes of the Church, thus providing unique contribution to the development of humanitarian life in Latvia.

During more than 20 years of its existence, RARZI has not received any financial support from the state. There are only tuition-fee based studies at the Institute. Due to specifics of the study field, only 200 students can be taught at the Institute simultaneously; however, during the past six years, the number of students varies between 50 and 100. Most of RARZI students are working, they have their own families, they have a strong motivation to study and they come from the entire territory

of Latvia (see Chart 1.1.1)

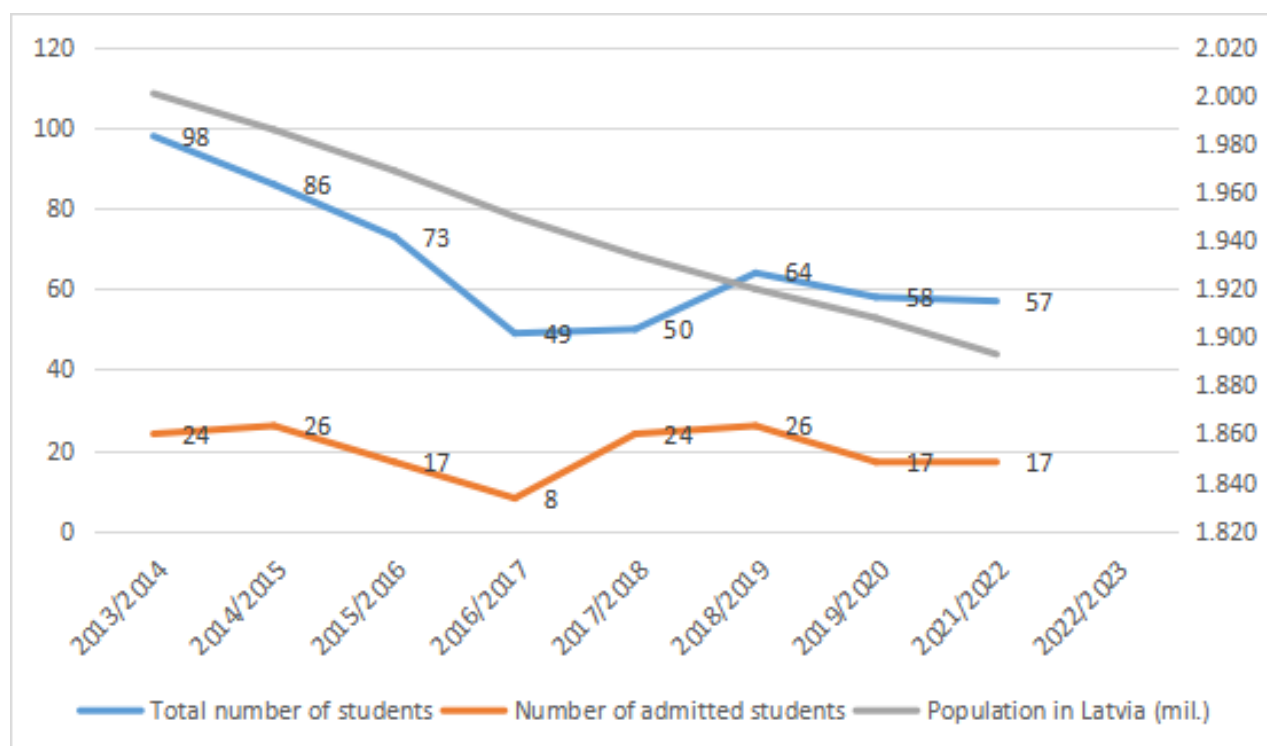


Chart 1.1.1.

*Total number of students and number of students admitted to RARZI between 2014 and 2022*

During the reporting period, the decrease in the number of students was caused by the rapid decrease in the number of population in Latvia, as well as general crisis in humanities throughout Europe. Challenges and their causes were studied at the conference on Theological Education in Higher Education Institutions in the Baltics in the Post-Soviet and Post-Secular Circumstances, which was organised on 3 – 4 June 2015 by the University of Latvia and attended by the management of all higher education institutions in Latvia related to theology studies, as well as and from Theology Faculty in Tartu. Even back then in Tartu, which is the leading study centre in the Baltics, the number of students had dropped from 400 to 100. In 2015, the number of students at RARZI was just slightly smaller, namely, there were 86 students. RARZI has to compete with higher education institutions, which receive stable funding from the state and where students can study free-of-charge and have a possibility to receive scholarship.

Particularly significant decrease in the number of students was observed in 2016/2017. It was caused by three factors. 1) until 2016, RARZI offered a professional master's degree programme in religion providing qualification of teacher of religious education and philosophy. As a result of secondary education content reform commenced in 2016 (*School 2030*), RARZI stopped admitting students in this study programme. 2) Student registration system was changed. 3) RARZI was relocated to other premises – Bishops' Conference of Latvia decided to relocate RARZI from premises in the Old Town to its current premises at Katoļu iela 16B, in order to create a single study centre together with the Riga Institute of Theology in the future. During the following two years, the decrease rate in the number of students stabilised.

The decrease in the number of students in 2021 and 2022 was caused by the following factors: 1) insecurity and financial instability due to Covid-19 pandemic; 2) war in Ukraine, global energy crisis and rapid inflation in Latvia, which reached 20%. The totality of these factors affected the possibilities of students to commence studies and take on a burden of tuition fee payments. However, this decrease in the number of students was not as dramatic as in 2016, because the

recent crisis is also linked to the need to regain spiritual health and stability, and it is expected that as a result of effective communication and public relations the number of students will increase.

On 12 April, 2023, the [Medium Term Development Strategy of RARZI for 2023 – 2027 was approved with the decision of the Bishops’ Conference of Latvia](#) . The Strategy emphasises the mission, which RARZI has set for the upcoming period and defines strategic goals in four areas of development: • development of studies; • research; • public awareness rising; • institutional development.

*Table 3*

*Map of strategic goals of RARZI, 2023 – 2027*

<i>Areas of development</i>	<i>Strategic goals</i>
I Development of studies	1. Solid offer for studies in religion and theology, which is based on Catholic tradition, is open to broadened ecumenical dialogue and embraces specific social needs
II Research	2. Efficient cooperation and involvement in strengthening research in the area of religion and theology, as well as application of research findings in developing the content of study programmes
III Public awareness rising	3. Active participation of RARZI in shaping public opinion and promoting of well-being
IV Institutional development	4. Institutional stability, infrastructure development and efficient management of RARZI

It is planned to merge RARZI and the RIT until 2027, thus strengthening the study field Religion and Theology, as well as consolidating the professorship and academic resources. Merger will also increase the institutional stability, allow creating new study opportunities, and attract more students.

## **1.2. Description of the management structure of the higher education institution/ college, the main institutions involved in the decision-making process, their composition (percentage depending on the position, for instance, the academic staff, administrative staff members, students), and the powers of these institutions.**

As RARZI is affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University, it is governed by the Dicastery for Culture and Education and supervised by the Faculty of Theology of the PLU. The link with these institutions is maintained by the Moderator of RARZI. The main decision-making bodies of RARZI are Bishops’ Conference of Latvia and its representative – the Moderator, as well as the Council of RARZI and the Director of RARZI.

In relations with the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See the main authority is vested in the Moderator of RARZI – the metropolitan Archbishop of Riga, who represents the

Bishops' Conference of Latvia, and the Rector of the Pontifical Lateran University. The Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See sets universal norms and supervises their implementation in all higher education institutions of the Roman Catholic Church, and in particular in the PLU and its affiliates; it also supervises implementation of the Bologna Declaration and the Lisbon Convention. This management institution makes decisions on establishment of affiliates and approval of their regulations, reviews the reports on activity of affiliates, as well as sets uniform criteria for selection and appointment of members of teaching staff.

The PLU and its Faculty of Theology set quality requirements and supervise their observation, *inter alia* during approval and implementation of study programmes, during appointment of the Director and members of teaching staff, during final examinations in academic bachelor's study programme in religion and theology and final examinations in professional master's study programme in religion and theology. The Rector of the PLU signs diplomas awarded to graduates of both study programmes.

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia supervises the conformity of RARZI's activity with the legislation in force in the Republic of Latvia. In relations with the Ministry of Education and Science the main authority is vested with the Moderator of RARZI – the metropolitan Archbishop of Riga, who represents the Bishops' Conference of Latvia, and the Director of RARZI.

RARZI was founded by the Bishops' Conference of Latvia (hereinafter referred to as the BCL), which is responsible for the activity and development of the Institute.

The Moderator of RARZI is the Archbishop of Riga, who represents the Bishops' Conference of Latvia. He proposes establishment of an affiliate, facilitates the compliance of activity of RARZI with its goals, supervises disciplinary and doctrinal orientation of RARZI, supervises economic activity of RARZI and approves its budget. Furthermore, the Moderator appoints the Director, the Head of the Study Department, members of the Council of the Directorate and teaching staff proposed by the Council of RARZI and approved by the Faculty of Theology of the PLU, approves amendments to the Regulations of RARZI and the Rules on Implementation of the Regulations, jointly with the Bishops' Conference of Latvia approves the Strategy of RARZI, jointly with the Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the PLU and the Director of RARZI signs diplomas, which attest to the academic degrees awarded, manages administration of extraordinary acts.

The Council of RARZI is composed of a representative of the Bishops' Conference of Latvia and the Faculty of Theology – the Moderator, the Director (elected for a 5-year term and may be re-elected for only one additional term), all professors and associate professors, two representatives of the Council of Students (elected for a 1-year term), as well as at least one representative of employees.

*Table 4*

*Representation in the Council of RARZI*

	<i>Total number of members</i>	<i>Representative of the Bishops' Conference of Latvia and the Faculty – the Moderator</i>	<i>Professors and representatives of teaching staff</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Employers</i>
Council of RARZI	11	9%	64%	18%	9%



The Director of RARZI manages and coordinates the activity of RARZI in accordance with the Regulations of RARZI.

The Director is elected for a 5-year term and may be re-elected for only one additional term.

### **1.3. Description of the mechanism for the implementation of the quality policy and the procedures for the assurance of the quality of higher education. Description of the stakeholders involved in the development and improvement of the quality assurance system and their role in these processes.**

RARZI has defined and published its **Quality Policy** (information available in Latvian), which outlines its attitude and commitment towards quality that will be ensured in implementation of its mission and facilitation of its balanced development in line with set directions of strategic development and values.

The Quality Policy is applicable to all areas of RARZI's activity, it is binding to the entire personnel of RARZI, including students, and, as far as possible, other parties involved in the activity of RARZI.

The Quality Policy of RARZI is based on the standards set by the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See, European standards, guidelines for ensuring quality in the higher education area in Europe (ESG), as well as the documents governing the quality of higher education in the Republic of Latvia. The Quality Policy of RARZI is determined by attempts to fulfil the binding requirements and expectations of parties involved in RARZI's activity. The goal of the Quality Policy is to guarantee a long-term development of the Institute in order to ensure presence of Catholic culture and tradition of education, as well as to support all students in their desire to obtain knowledge in Catholic theology and Christian anthropology, and to enable students to receive the qualification of pastoral counsellor and thus to work and give professional contribution to the society and the Church in Latvia.

The Director of RARZI is responsible for the quality management, namely, the Director ensures management of the Institute, functionality of quality assurance system for studies (see more information in 2.2.1), and regular involvement of stakeholders of RARZI's activity in quality improvement.

RARZI's quality management and quality assurance implementation **mechanism** for higher education is based on Deming's continuous improvement cycle and follows the **ESG**. It consists of the following planning documents and procedures:

- **Plan:** RARZI Strategy, Quality Policy, Code of Ethics.
- **Do:** Descriptions of study programmes and procedures defining study-related processes (internal regulations).
- **Check:** Reports and self-assessment reports.
- **Act:** potential amendments to the Strategy and internal normative regulations.

**Plan:** The Moderator and the Director of RARZI are responsible for strategic management. The Strategy for 2023-2027 is up to date at the time of drafting. The moderator, the director, the heads of the study units, the lecturers, the professors were involved in its elaboration. The views of students, alumni and employers were also taken into account throughout the process. The document was discussed at the Board of Directors and at the professors' meetings. The Strategy was approved by the Bishops' Conference of Latvia.

**Do:** The Director of RARZI ensures operations and implements development plans. The Director, in cooperation with the Moderator, ensures the liaison with the Dean of the Faculty of Theology and the Rector of the LPU, as well as the Dicastery for Catholic Education and Culture. The Director, in cooperation with the Moderator, shall also liaise with the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia Republic. The Director also ensures and develops links with other universities of a similar profile in Latvia, Europe and the USA. The Director is responsible for the elaboration of documentation regulating the content and process of studies, planning the study process, as well as organising its implementation. Quality assurance procedures for higher education include activities for the elaboration of study programmes, the implementation of the study process and regular evaluation, as defined in the internal normative acts of RARZI. In order to attract international funding, the Director cooperates with the Project Manager and the President of the Latvian Bishops' Conference in coordinating the elaboration, application, implementation and reporting of projects. The Director works in close cooperation with the Head of Studies and holds weekly operational meetings of the Board of Directors. In order to ensure the quality of theses, BC and MA theses, the Director, Head of the Study Department convenes once a semester meetings of the extended Directorate, attended by professors and associate professors, to review the themes of the theses, agree on the thesis supervisors, the process for the defence of the thesis and other issues related to the quality assurance of the thesis.

**Check:** As RARZI has only one study field, the principles for its development and monitoring are included in the RARZI Strategy. The supervision of the study field is carried out primarily by the Faculty of Theology of LPU, the Bishops' Conference of Latvia represented by the moderator of RARZI, the RARZI Council. Quality control of RARZI is carried out through different levels of reporting. First of all, at the meetings of the Institute Council, which take place at least twice during the academic year and are attended by the moderator as representative of the LBC, the Director who chairs the meeting, the Head of the Study Department, all professors and associate professors, two student representatives, at least one employer. The RARZI Council meetings are held to report on the Institute's work in key areas, including an analysis of achievements and challenges. Also, at the end of each academic year, the Institute provides a full report on the past year to the Faculty of Theology of LPU. Every five years, the Director gives a full report on the life of the Institute, first to the Moderator, then to the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at LPU, and then to the Dicastery for Catholic Education and Culture. The evaluation of the scientific and pedagogical qualifications of the academic staff of RARZI and the review of the work assignments also take place at least every five years, at the same time as the preparation and submission of the Institute's five-year report to the Faculty of Theology of LPU. The RARZI verification principle is also implemented in the daily work process by collecting and analysing data at weekly Directorate meetings, during the semester in working groups of professors and in discussions with students of each course by the Head of the Study Department. Once a semester, the Head of the Study Department, in cooperation with the Director, meets with the students of each course for a consultation in order to listen to the students' wishes, complaints, problems and to find a solution to them.

**Act:** Based on the different levels of scrutiny, RARZI's development objectives and decisions on what to do next are taken and, where necessary, coordinated with RARZI's related decision-making bodies. The implementation of the Strategy is subject to regular monitoring by the Board of Directors (once a quarter), the Council of the Institute (two or three times a year) and the Latvian Bishops' Conference (once a year).

#### **1.4. Fill in the table on the compliance of the internal quality assurance system of the higher education institution/ college with the provisions of Section 5, Paragraph 2(1) of**

**the Law on Higher Education Institutions by providing a justification for the given statement. In addition, it is also possible to refer to the respective chapter of the Self-Assessment Report, where the provided information serves as justification.**

1.	The higher education institution/ college has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education.	RARZI has defined its Quality Policy and made it publicly available (see Section 1.3 of Part I). Quality assurance system for studies offered by RARZI is based on Deming's continuous improvement cycle and takes into account the quality assurance standards and guidelines for the higher education area in Europe (ESG) (see Section 2.2.2 of Part II).
2.	A mechanism for the creation 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.	Mechanism for creation and internal approval of study programmes is set forth in the Rules on Management of the Study Field and the Study Programmes at the Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University (see Section 2.2.1 of Part II). Supervision of functionality of study programmes and their periodic inspection is ensured in the framework of Quality Assurance System (see Section 2.2.2 of Part II).
3.	The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and made public.	Evaluation of student achievements is set forth in the Rules for Evaluation of Student Achievements at the Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University, Regulations and Methodology for Student Research Papers and the Decision of RARZI of 18.05.2018 (minutes No. 2946/18) on the Procedure of Final Examinations. Expected learning outcomes of a study course, tests chosen for outcome evaluation and evaluation criteria are specified in the course description, which is presented to students at the beginning of their studies (see Section 1.3. of Part I).
4.	Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.	Attraction and hiring of teaching staff (including advertising of vacancies, election procedure, etc.) is set forth in the Regulations of RARZI. RARZI has established a uniform procedure for evaluation of qualification and work quality of academic personnel. This procedure is also contained in the Regulations of RARZI (see Section 2.3.5 of Part II)

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.	RARZI ensures gathering and analysis of data on former experience of students, process of studies and career after graduation. The data are used in the process of studies, inter alia for promotion of a student-centered approach, as well as in assessment of the quality and improvement of studies. Satisfaction-related data are gathered in surveys, individual discussions and general meetings. The data are gathered and, on the grounds of data analysis, the activity of RARZI is further improved (see Section 2.2.4 of Part I).
6.	The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.	Quality assurance system of RARZI is based on Deming's continuous improvement cycle; and thus, the reporting on various levels and regular assessment during the meetings of the Council of the Institute, at the Faculty of Theology of the PLU, as well as at the Dicastery for Culture and Education have a significant role in ensuring regular review, which is envisaged by the system. Measures of assessment in RARZI are taken also on daily basis by gathering and analysing data during weekly meetings of the Directorate, as well as each semester in working groups of professors and meetings of the Head of the Study Department with students from each study year. Once a semester, discussions with students are held (see Section 2.2.1).

## 2.1. Management of the Study Field

**2.1.1. Aims of the study field and their compliance with the scope of activities of the higher education institution/ college, the strategic development fields, as well as the development needs of the society and the national economy. The assessment of the interrelation of the study field and the study programmes included in it.**

Education in RARZI is based on tradition of philosophical and theological anthropology. It offers comprehensive explanation of an individual and the society, as well as reveals fundamental values, which enable realisation of potential of human nature. The diverse studies in humanities, such as theology, philosophy, ethics, psychology, pedagogy, social studies, culture and history of religions, are subordinated to this anthropological idea. Their goal is to facilitate a dialogue between the Church and culture, thus improving the balance of ethical and cultural values in the society. This strategic approach is the basis for accordingly subordinated goals of the study field. RARZI implements the study field Religion and Theology in order to provide an opportunity to obtain

bachelor’s and professional master’s degrees, which are based on Catholic tradition and study of Catholic theology, by taking an ecumenical approach, by respecting public needs, and by providing professional specialists that would satisfy the needs of the Church and the society. This goal matches the [Strategy for 2023 – 2027 of the Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University](#) and the goal it sets:

*Solid offer for studies in religion and theology, which is based on Catholic tradition, is open to broadened ecumenical dialogue and embraces specific social needs.*

The study process is centred on students; it envisages active involvement of both students and academic personnel in scientific research through studying, explaining and translating Catholic teaching, activity of the Church in society, and history of the Church. This ensures compliance with the goal set forth in the strategy of the RARZI, namely. *efficient cooperation and involvement in strengthening of research in the area of religion and theology, as well as application of research findings in developing the content of study programmes.*

The study field offers students an opportunity to obtain an academic bachelor’s degree in religion, as well as continue studies in master’s study programme and to obtain master’s degree in religion and a qualification of pastoral counsellor. With this qualification the graduates can work in various institutions of the Church, movements and groups, as well as in hospitals, retirement houses, rehabilitation institutions, prisons and armed forces by offering services of a chaplain or a pastoral counsellor. This leads towards another goal set forth in the development plan, namely, *to develop active participation of RARZI in shaping public opinion and promoting of well-being.*

**2.1.2. SWOT analysis of the study field with regard to the set aims by providing explanations on how the higher education institution/ college expects to eliminate/ improve weaknesses, prevent threats, and avail themselves of the given opportunities, etc. The assessment of the plan for the development of the study field for the next six years and the procedure of the elaboration thereof. In case there is no development plan elaborated or the aims/ objectives are set for a shorter period of time, information on the elaboration of the plan for the development of the study field for the next assessment period shall be provided.**

The SWOT analysis of the study field offered by RARZI is considered every year during the self-evaluation in order to assess internal and external changes by analysing strengths and weaknesses, to forecast possible threats and seek ways to prevent them, as well as to assess the opportunities for development and to discuss the ways for targeted realisation of this potential.

Analysis of internal and external factors is made from the perspective of the goals set forth in the Strategy of RARZI. Table 5 reflects the SWOT analysis of the study field Religion and Theology.

Table 5

*SWOT analysis of the study field Religion and Theology, 2022*

Internal factors	
Strengths	Weaknesses

- The only place for obtaining a specialisation of pastoral counsellor
- Graduates have an opportunity to obtain two diplomas – prestigious international diploma of the PLU and diploma awarded in Latvia
- Ecumenical learning environment which fosters spiritual and human growth
- Link to the leadership of the Church
- High level of student motivation
- Majority of students already have a higher education and are well prepared
- Friendly and personalised study environment and student-centred approach
- Possibility to combine studies and work
- Equal gender representation both among students and teaching staff
- Balanced representation of elderly, middle-age and young members of teaching staff
- Spiritual and psychological support is available to students
- Courses in theology are taught mainly by priests, who combine teaching with pastoral functions
- Large proportion of teaching staff have international study experience in various European countries and the USA
- Institute is located in the so-called quiet centre, which fits its specifics and is suitable for students
- Well-equipped and spacious study rooms, student lounges, computer room and reading room

- Niche product – low demand
- No support provided by the state – RARZI has to compete with higher education institutions which receive full and regular funding from the state and which offer state-funded study places and scholarships
- Part-time teaching load is low which makes them seek for additional employment
- Insufficient funding for research
- Anonymously reviewed specialised journal *Terra Mariana* is not available on Scopus or Web of Science database
- Until the complete merger of RARZI and RIT, the library is divided into separate sections for each of them
- Cooperation agreement on establishment of a uniform digital anti-plagiarism system has to be finalised and implemented
- Limited administrative resources
- Infrastructure is not suitable for people with disabilities

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## External factors

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### Opportunities

### Threats

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Development of competences and research activity of the academic personnel in collaboration with the PLU</li> <li>· Broader sharing of resources and partner databases with the PLU</li> <li>· Attraction of sponsors in public activities</li> <li>· High growth potential after merger with the RIT</li> <li>· Cooperation with other higher education institutions in Latvia having a similar profile</li> <li>· International cooperation with Catholic higher education institutions in Europe and the USA</li> <li>· Use of anti-plagiarism system</li> <li>· Introduction of distance learning</li> <li>· Digitalisation of study process</li> <li>· More frequent involvement in Erasmus+ programme</li> <li>· Development and increased accessibility of infrastructure; introduction of sustainable solutions</li> <li>· Attraction of funding for development of the Institute and research from international and local foundations</li> <li>· Creation of scholarship support fund for students</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Demographical situation in Latvia – decrease in the number of potential students</li> <li>· Economic situation in the state – decrease in the ability to pay tuition fees and make donations</li> <li>· Limitations for use of EU languages in study programmes on all levels</li> </ul> |
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### **Analysis of internal factors**

#### **Special role of RARZI in the Latvia's education area: strengths and weaknesses**

RARZI is a small higher education institution, but being an affiliate to the PLU it has a special role in Latvia's education area. It can synthesise and integrate academic standards of an internationally-recognised and prestigious higher education institution in Latvia. However, this aspect also puts additional pressure on RARZI, as it has to undergo two processes of accreditation – accreditation in the Republic of Latvia, and accreditation by the PLU and the Dicastery for Culture and Education.

RARZI has a special mission in cooperation between Latvia and the Holy See, which is outlined in the concordat or international agreement.

Due to close cooperation with the leadership of the Catholic Church in Latvia, RARZI provides humanitarian and social contribution to ensuring spiritual well-being and formation of spiritual climate in Latvia.

Because of RARZI, a new and currently essential profession in Latvia – pastoral counsellor – has been entered in the registry of professions in Latvia. This is a new profession; however, graduates of RARZI have been working in hospitals, army, social institutions, prisons and Church parishes throughout Latvia for already nearly a decade. RARZI is the only higher education institution which offers education in this specialisation.

Unfortunately, by now the demand for these specialists has been low, and it is only gradually being

recognised by various institutions. Current political and economic situation, which is characterised by the war in Ukraine, energy crisis, psychological aftermath of Covid-19 pandemic, increases the need for pastoral counsellors, chaplains and catechists. In order to address these challenges and provide information on available opportunities, RARZI and the leadership of Catholic Church in Latvia have held several negotiations with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Welfare.

RARZI is the only higher education institution which offers studies in religious sciences based on tradition of Catholic theology and philosophy.

Graduates of RARZI can obtain two diplomas – diploma from the prestigious, international university – the PLU, and diploma issued in Latvia; they also have an opportunity to continue licentiate and doctorate studies in any pontifical university around the world.

RARZI is ecumenically open higher education institution, whose teaching staff and students represent various religious denominations. There is also a healthy balance in gender and age representation among teaching staff and students.

State funding is not allocated to RARZI; therefore, it has to compete with higher education institutions, which have state-funded study places and even scholarships. Studies in RARZI are exclusively tuition-fee based. Therefore, RARZI has to develop deeper and specific public relations policy, which would motivate and attract people to study at RARZI. Furthermore, the Strategy of RARZI envisages a merger with the Riga Institute of Theology, which will allow offering onsite studies in Catholic theology. That will strengthen and consolidate both academic and administrative resources, as well as increase the number of students.

As far as possible, RARZI plans to overcome its weaknesses related to the position of RARZI in Latvia's academic area, or improve on them. The Strategy of RARZI defines the main goals and tasks. Initially, RARZI will offer solid studies in the field of religion and theology based on Catholic tradition, which are open to broadened ecumenical dialogue and embraces specific social needs. In order to overcome weaknesses, RARZI will focus on recognisability and prestige of the Institute in Latvian society by improving the quality of its public relations and advertising, by providing information and explanations about the significance of RARZI's specialisation in strengthening the spiritual environment in Latvia thorough deeper ecumenical dialogue in the study content and its implementation.

### **Students of RARZI: strengths and weaknesses**

Students of RARZI have a strong motivation: profession of pastoral counsellor, chaplain and catechist taught at RARZI requires special motivation and personal maturity, particularly because the work in social institutions, prisons, hospitals and counselling centres is not prestigious and highly remunerated. Thus, the number of students studying at RARZI is not high. Furthermore, as mentioned above, studies are based on tuition fees.

Majority of students at RARZI already have obtained higher education and are well prepared. As they are already working in their initial profession, part-time, onsite studies are suitable for them – in RARZI it is possible to study on weekends, which allows successfully combining studies and work and attracting students from all regions of Latvia.

Being a small higher education institution, RARZI has its advantages, namely, the study environment is friendly with personal and student-centred approach.

Location of RARZI in the centre of Riga, spacious and well-equipped study rooms, student lounges, computer room, reading room and library are convenient and fit the mission of the Institute.



RARZI has a special concern for the spiritual and psychological well-being of its students, and it offers to students and teaching staff the spiritual guidance by a chaplain and regular retreats or spiritual renewal activities to prevent the risk of burnout. So far, RARZI has not been able to create an infrastructure suitable for people with disabilities. There are two reasons for that. First, RARZI has been relocated during the past eight years. Second, financial reasons – funds that could have been invested in meeting these special needs had to be invested in improving the premises after relocation. Merger of two institutes will create a single Catholic higher education institution and stabilise issues related to improving of premises.

As far as possible, RARZI also plans to overcome or improve on weaknesses related to students by seeking financial resources to mitigate the burden of tuition fees, internationalising the study environment, expanding research opportunities and expanding the network of cooperation partners – potential employers

### **Teaching staff of RARZI: strengths and weaknesses**

High proportion of RARZI's teaching staff has international study experience in other European countries and the USA.

Most often, teaching staff of RARZI, especially those teaching subjects on Catholic theology, are unique specialists in Latvia's educational area. This aspects also has its downside, because with part-time onsite study programmes at RARZI their teaching load is low and consequently they are forced to seek for additional employment.

A particular feature of RARZI's teaching staff is that the most of specialists in theology subjects are priests who combine teaching and pastoral work.

The planned merger of RARZI and the RIT will strengthen and unite the teaching staff.

So far, research in RARZI has been underfunded; therefore, in future, cooperation with the Pontifical Lateran University and other Roman Catholic higher education institutions will be intensified so that teaching staff of RARZI can make greater use of their resources, namely, the opportunity to work in the archives and libraries of higher education institutions in Rome, and to participate in joint seminars and conferences.

As far as possible, RARZI also plans to overcome or improve weaknesses related to its teaching staff, by expanding and strengthening their research opportunities by cooperating with pontifical universities and having access to their resources, by expanding research cooperation with similar higher education institutions in Latvia and by promoting participation in international research projects and conferences.

### **Infrastructure and financial resources of RARZI: strengths and weaknesses**

As RARZI receives no funding from the state, it is difficult for the Institute to have financial stability. Increase in the number of students and attracting of larger amount of international funding are among possible future solutions to this issue.

Administrative fragmentation and lack of administrative resources will be overcome by the merger of RARZI and the RIT.

Until the merger of both institutes, the library is divided into RARZI and RIT sections.

As far as possible, RARZI plans to overcome or improve on weaknesses related to financial resources and infrastructure. The Strategy of RARZI states that RARZI and the RIT will be merged, and thus their academic and financial resources will be consolidated, investments will be drawn to modernise the infrastructure (conference room in line with modern requirements will be built), a

long-term financing plan will be devised in cooperation with the Bishops' Conference of Latvia and international investors will be attracted. A single library of RARZI and the RIT with a single electronic database will be created.

### **Analysis of external factors**

#### **Threats/Solutions**

RARZI believes that the main threats are related to the declining demographic trend in Latvia, which may result in the decrease in the number of potential students, as well as the deteriorating economic situation in the state, which may lead to a decline in the ability to pay tuition fees and donations. To mitigate the risk of these threats, RARZI plans to expand its target audience, continue enriching the education opportunities it offers, and introduce distance learning opportunities. Merger of the two Catholic institutes, their broadened cooperation with the PLU and the use of PLU's resource base have a great potential. There is also an untapped potential in cooperation between RARZI and other higher education institutions with similar profile in Latvia, Europe and the USA. RARZI will intensify its work with sponsors and international foundations in order to mitigate financial threats.

#### **2.1.3. The structure of the management of the study field and the relevant study programmes, and the analysis and assessment of the efficiency thereof, including the assessment of the role of the head of the study field and the heads of the study programmes, their responsibilities, and the cooperation with other heads of the study programmes, as well as the assessment of the support by the administrative and technical staff of the higher education institution/ college provided within the study field.**

RARZI implements one study field, namely, Religion and Theology, and offers studies in two programmes:

- academic bachelor's study programme "Religion" (title promoted for accreditation "Religion and Theology"), awarding bachelor's degree of humanities in religion and theology (code of the study programme – 43221);
- professional master's study programme "Religion" (title promoted for accreditation "Religion and Theology"), awarding master's degree in religion and theology and professional qualification of pastoral counsellor (code of the study programme - 47221).

As the institute offers studies in just one field, management is focussed on implementation of this study field. Decision-making bodies of RARZI have collegiate responsibility for management of the study field. The highest level of management is ensured by the Grand Chancellor of the PLU, the Rector of the PLU and the Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the PLU; they exercise their authority in RARZI through the Moderator, who is also the representative of the Bishops' Conference of Latvia. The Bishops' Conference of Latvia is responsible for the activity of the Institute, and, together with the Institute, it makes decisions on the management of the study field.

The Moderator is also the Chair of the Council of RARZI, who supervises the quality of studies. The Director of the Study Field – the Director of RARZI, and the Director of Study Programmes are ensure the quality of the study field and relevant study programmes. This link is a key to efficient cooperation between the highest decision-making bodies and the bodies implementing the study field.

Both study programmes offered by RARZI are managed by the Head of the Study Department. The Head of the Study Department of RARZI is appointed by the Moderator after consultations with the Director of RARZI. In order to ensure the efficient implementation of study programmes, the Head of the Study Department coordinates activity with the Director of the Study Field during weekly meetings of the Directorate, at the meetings of the professors' group and at the meetings of the Council of RARZI. The Head of the Study Department ensures drafting of an annual report on study programmes and submits it to the Council of RARZI for review and approval.

The Director and the Head of the Study Department collaborate and consult with the groups of professors. Each member of teaching staff is responsible for the quality of content and implementation of their respective courses, as well as for the research and professional development. On daily basis, the quality of studies is also monitored and organised by the Council of the Directorate.

The Director of RARZI is also the Director of the Study Field. The Director of the Study Field is responsible for ensuring the management and development of the study field. The Director, thus also the Director of the Study Field, is approved by the Moderator of RARZI upon receiving *nulla osta* consent from the Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the PLU. The Director of the Study Field is accountable to the Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the PLU, the Moderator and the Council of RARZI. The Director of the Study Field together with the Director of Study Programmes ensure the revision of study programmes offered within the study field, as well as the planning and facilitation of development. The Director of the Study Field cooperates closely with the Head of the Study Department in organising regular meetings of the Directorate, and The Director of the Study Field cooperates with professors in organising extended meetings of the Directorate. The Director of the Study Field together with the Director of the Study Programmes ensure the accreditation and reaccreditation of the study field, as well as fulfil other duties.

The Council of RARZI is responsible for the study field as well. It is a collegiate management body, which supervises academic and professional study programmes of the study field on all levels. The Council of RARZI is composed of the Moderator, the Director of the Study Field, the Director of Study Programmes, all professors and associate professors, representatives of the self-government of students, as well as employer representatives. If needed, during discussions on availability of research literature, the librarian is invited to take part in the Council meetings. Likewise, when the Council of RARZI considers matters related to development of the study field, representatives of graduates may be invited to attend the meeting. The Council of RARZI assesses annual report on study programmes submitted by the Head of the Study Department, as well as reviews and approves changes to the study programmes.

Self-government of students has a significant role in the management of the study field as it monitors the quality of studies and shares its suggestions and initiatives with the Head of the Study Department and the Director. Responsibilities of students are envisaged by their rights and obligations to facilitate fulfilment of RARZI goals and excellence in studies through involvement in collegiate bodies and regular opinion sharing in student surveys. Students have an opportunity to submit their personal initiatives and complaints. Representatives of students also take part in the Council of RARZI, thus making implementation of study programmes more efficient by giving suggestions and providing analysis of the study process.

Employers also have a significant role in supervision of the quality of the study field and study programmes, and RARZI uses feedback provided by employers by analysing their opinions and suggestions. Employers are also represented at the Board of RARZI. Furthermore, RARZI implements projects which are frequently related to the areas represented by employers.

Administrative personnel of RARZI and quality of its work are significant for high-quality

implementation of the study field and study programmes. Thus, for example, the project manager provides contribution by drafting and managing projects, which are related to institutions of future employers, by working on scientific conferences of students and teaching staff, as well as by working on cooperation projects within the framework of Erasmus. The Book Office of RARZI, which translates the philosophical and theological literature needed for studies, also facilitates raising of the quality of the study process. Work of the librarian is also essential, as the librarian monitors the availability of research materials and study resources. The secretary-desk officer significantly contributes to optimisation of information exchange. Actually, the secretary-desk officer has a key role in ensuring the communication among students, teaching staff and administration.

The quality of management of the study field is monitored with the help of student surveys, which are organised once per each academic year and which assess the quality of study environment and study process at RARZI. Mostly students are satisfied with the management of the study field, and they have a particularly positive opinion about the recollections, which are organised by RARZI and facilitate cooperation and dialogue at the Institute.

Efficiency of management is also facilitated by a uniform approach taken on study organisation in the study field and study programmes, uniform document samples and accessibility of information about current developments and topical issues. All major activities at RARZI are planned prior to the new study year and involve devising of the study schedule, schedules for drafting graduation thesis and an annual activity plan.

Structure of the management of the study field is based on [the Regulations of RARZI](#).

See the schematic structure of management of the study field in Annex 4 *Schematic structure of RARZI management of the study field*

**2.1.4. Description and assessment of the requirements and the system for the admission of students by specifying, inter alia, the regulatory framework of the admission procedures and requirements. The assessment of options for the students to have their study period, professional experience, and the previously acquired formal and non-formal education recognised within the study field by providing specific examples of the application of these procedures.**

Admission requirements and procedure are set forth in the [Rules on Admission to Bachelor's and Master's Study Programme](#) (information available in Latvian). With these Rules, admission to studies at RARZI is in line with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 846 of 10 October 2006 on the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes, the Instruction on Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences adopted by the Congregation for Catholic Education of Vatican on 28 June 2008, the Regulations of RARZI (*Statuto*), the Rules on Implementation of the Regulations of RARZI, as well as other relevant regulatory enactments. Admission is managed by the Admission Commission of RARZI, which acts in accordance with the [Regulations on the Admission Commission of RARZI](#) (information available in Latvian). Special requirements and criteria for admission to each study programme, as well as other indicators characteristic to respective study programme are set forth in the annexes to the Rules. Possibility to recognise prior formal education and education obtained outside the framework of formal education in the study field is set forth by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 505 of 14 August 2018 on Recognition of Competences Acquired Outside the Framework of Formal Education or Obtained through Professional Experience and Recognition of Learning Outcomes of Prior

## Education

(<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301013-arpus-formalas-izglitiba-apguto-vai-profesionalaja-pieredze-ieguto-kompetencu-un-iepriekseja-izglitiba-sasniegtu> (information available in Latvian)), which indicate that after resuming suspended studies, learning outcomes of prior education, as well as learning outcomes acquired outside the framework of formal education and/or through professional experience can be recognised in another study programme. Documents attesting to the learning outcomes, such as certificates, confirmations of the employer, recommendations, project outcomes, description of duties at work, etc., should be attached to the submission. Requirements for recognition of prior education are also outlined in RARZI [Regulations on Learning Outcomes Obtained in Prior Education or through Professional Experience](#) (information available in Latvian); the [Rules of Commencing Studies at RARZI at a Later Stage of Study Process](#) (information available in Latvian) describe the procedure for commencing studies at a later stage of the study process.

Admission to RARZI and study programmes it offers within the study field Religion and Theology is governed by the Rules on Admission and orders, which are issued pursuant to these Rules and which envisage procedures to be observed each academic year:

- admission requirements and criteria for a study programme;
- admission requirements and criteria for a higher level study programme;
- admission procedure for academic year;
- admission registration fee;
- tuition fees in study programmes;
- number of offered study places;
- composition of the Admission Commission;
- date, place and time of admission examination.

**Submission of documents.** Documents and application form should be filed by the applicant in person. If the applicant is unable to file documents in person, they can be signed with a secure electronic signature and sent to the official e-mail of RARZI [rarzi@rarzi.lv](mailto:rarzi@rarzi.lv). Submitted documents should be in the state language. Documents in a foreign language should be legalised according to the procedure set forth in the regulatory enactments, and a duly notarised translation in the state language should be attached. If the applicant has received a document attesting to education or academic degree obtained abroad, the application should be accompanied by a reference of the Academic Information Centre that indicates, which education document issued in Latvia or which academic degree awarded in Latvia is considered as equal to the particular education document issued or degree awarded abroad.

**Registration fee.** Upon submission of documents, the applicant transfers to the account of RARZI a payment for document registration.

**Deadline for registration.** Deadline for registration is set by the Director of RARZI and is announced by the Admission Commission.

**Admission examination.** Admission competition in RARZI is organised in the format of admission interview. The period, place and time of admission interview is set by the Admission Commission of RARZI. The admission competition is deemed finished upon the announcement of results by Commission of RARZI three days after the last examination.

Admission to the bachelor's study programme. Applicants with secondary education are eligible for bachelor's study programme. Admission competition is based on the grades received in final centralised examinations or grades indicated in the education certificate (for individuals, who have completed secondary education prior to 2004, who are released from taking centralised examinations or who have completed secondary education abroad).

Admission to the master's study programme. Applicants with the following prior education are eligible for master's study programme: • applicants, who hold a bachelor's degree awarded by the Pontifical Lateran University or have a compatible higher education degree of humanities in religion/theology awarded by an education institution recognised by the Congregation for Catholic Education of Vatican; • applicants, who hold a bachelor's degree in religion or theology awarded by a non-Catholic higher education institution; • applicants, who hold a bachelor's degree in social sciences or humanities. Applicants holding a bachelor's degree awarded by a non-Catholic higher education institution have to take an introductory course in Catholic theology (24 credit points, 36 ECTS) to be eligible for studies at the master's study programme of RARZI. See the explanatory chart 2.1.4.

Applicants, who have received a diploma attesting to higher or secondary education obtained abroad, should undergo a recognition of the diploma or education at the Academic Information Centre. RARZI can recognise certain courses in social sciences and humanities studied at other higher education institutions in Latvia or abroad. Recognition of courses is considered on the grounds of student's submission filed with the Head of the Study Department of RARZI. On the grounds of such a submission, the Recognition Commission composed of the Head of the Study Department, the Director and a professor of RARZI, is set up. The Commission considers the volume and content of the course that can be recognised and takes a decision. Final examinations are not recognised. Professional experience gained during the internship, for example, in Erasmus+ Internship Mobility Programme, may be recognised for students of the master's study programme. Any case of education or experience recognition should be coordinated with the Faculty of Theology of the PLU. If a decision on recognition is positive, recognised learning outcomes are added to the list of academic obligations fulfilled by the student. Recognition of study courses or education obtained outside the framework of formal education is a service provided for a fee indicated in the pricelist of RARZI services.

During the reporting period, prior education has been recognised for several students transferring from the Riga Institute of Theology to RARZI.

#### **2.1.5. Assessment of the methods and procedures for the evaluation of students' achievements, as well as the principles of their selection and the analysis of the compliance of the evaluation methods and procedures with the aims of the study programmes and the needs of the students.**

Procedure for evaluation of students at RARZI is determined by the Rules for Evaluation of Student Achievements at the Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University, the Regulations and Methodology for Student Research Papers and the Decision of RARZI of 18.05.2018 (minutes No. 2946/18) on the Procedure of Final Examinations. These regulations determine the procedure, requirements and criteria for the evaluation of final examinations (bachelor's thesis, master's thesis, final examinations of the study programme), study courses and tests, term papers and internship. These regulatory documents have been developed in compliance with evaluation principles set forth in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 512 of 12.09.2014 on National Standards for Second Level Professional Higher Education: the principle of openness of evaluation (university has established a set of requirements for evaluation of study outcomes in accordance with the goal and tasks set for the study programme, as well as the goal and tasks of the study courses); the principle of the re-evaluation possibility (university has established the procedure for revision of evaluation); the principle of the mandatory evaluation (it is

necessary to get a positive evaluation for the entire content of the study programme); the principle of evaluation diversity (different types of evaluation are used to assess the learning of the study programme); the principle of appropriateness of evaluation (during evaluation, the student is given an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills and competence with appropriate tasks and situations). The content of tests should be consistent with the content of the course programmes.

Outcomes to be achieved, tests chosen for outcome evaluation and evaluation criteria are specified in the course description, which is presented to students at the beginning of their studies. The type of mid-term tests and examinations, evaluation procedure and criteria, as well as evaluation principles are determined by teaching staff in compliance with regulatory documents of RARZI. Outcomes of the study course are evaluated both during the semester – in mid-term tests, and at the end of the study course – in an examination. Mid-term tests may be organised as a tests, independent works, presentation, essay, report, paper, etc., and they are determined by study outcomes set for the study course. Tests may be written, oral or a combination of both. The number and type of mid-term tests are set forth in the course description. At the end of each study course, the student takes the final test of the study course – an examination, or, in case of internships and term papers – a defence. In accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 512 of 12.09.2014 on the National Standards for the Second Level Professional Higher Education, RARZI uses a 10-grade evaluation system. The study course is completed and the credits for its completion are awarded after both mid-term test and in the final test of the course is passed successfully (grade not lower than 4).

Explanation of the 10-grade evaluation system, which is used for evaluation of study outcomes at RARZI and corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 512 of 12.09.2014 on the National Standards for the Second Level Professional Higher Education.

Grade (meaning)	Explanation
10 (outstanding)	knowledge, skills and competence exceeds the requirements of a study programme, study module or study course, demonstrates ability to carry out independent research and deep understanding of issues
9 (excellent)	knowledge, skills and competence fully corresponds to the requirements of a study programme, study module or study course; skills to independently use the acquired knowledge have been obtained
8 (very good)	requirements of a study programme, study module or study course are completely fulfilled; however, on certain occasions the understanding is not sufficiently deep to independently use knowledge and skills to solve more complicated problems
7 (good)	requirements of a study programme, study module or study course are generally fulfilled; however, on certain occasions there is an inability to independently use the acquired knowledge and skills
6 (almost good)	requirements of a study programme, study module or study course are fulfilled; however, understanding of the issues is not sufficiently deep and skills to use the acquired knowledge are insufficient

5 (average)	a study programme, study module or study course is generally acquired; however, there is insufficient understanding of some issues and skills to use the acquired knowledge are insufficient
4 (almost average)	a study programme, study module or study course is generally acquired; however, there is insufficient understanding of some basic concepts and there are considerable difficulties in practical application of the acquired knowledge
3 (weak)	superficial and incomplete knowledge; a student is unable to use it in certain situations
2 (very weak)	there is superficial knowledge about certain problems, the biggest part of a study programme, study module or study course is not acquired
1 (extremely weak)	there is no understanding of fundamentals of the subject; there is almost no knowledge about a study programme, study module or study course

Appropriateness of evaluation of outcomes of the study course to achieving the goals of the study programme and needs of students is assessed at the end of the study course by analysing the learning outcomes of the specific group of students and by comparing the year-on-year outcomes. Teaching staff also analyses the outcomes from the perspective of all courses of the study programme and their outcomes by discussing the rate of learning success and assessing the mastering of the programme. If necessary, the evaluation procedure of study courses is revised or changes are made in the content of study courses or organisation and planning of courses by developing learning and evaluation criteria that are in line with the expected learning outcomes.

Procedure and criteria used for evaluation of the final theses are set forth in the Regulations and Methodology for Student Research Papers and the Decision of RARZI of 18.05.2018 (minutes No 2946/18) on the Procedure of Final Examinations. When starting work on the final thesis, students are informed about the methodological guidelines for stages and procedure of evaluation of the final thesis. Final theses at RARZI are evaluated by the final thesis defence commission, the composition of which is approved by the Council of the Directorate. Reviewer of final thesis is selected by the director of the study programme and approved by the Council of the Directorate. Final thesis is defended in an open session of the commission; however, evaluation on the grounds of 10-grade system is made by the commission in a closed meeting, and it takes into account the opinion of the supervising tutor and the reviewer, the content, relevance, uniformity, proper use of references and formatting of the thesis, as well as presentation, answers given to questions, and ability of the student to get involved in a discussion by using appropriate terminology. When opinions of commission members differ, the commission takes an open vote.

A preliminary defence is organised for master's theses. At the preliminary defence, the student presents at least 70% of master's thesis. The student is not admitted to the defence of master's thesis if an unsatisfactory grade is received at the preliminary defence, and the defence of master's thesis is then postponed to the next academic year.

In order to ensure academic integrity, final theses are subject to plagiarism check.



**2.1.6. Description and assessment of the academic integrity principles, the mechanisms for compliance with these principles, and the way in which the stakeholders are informed. Specify the plagiarism detection tools used by providing examples of the use of these tools and mechanisms.**

Observation of principle of academic integrity in the activity of RARZI is primarily based on the [Academic Code of Ethics of RARZI](#) (also available in English), which defines both general principles of academic integrity, and principles of academic integrity of the teaching staff, the students and the employees. The Code also defines the procedure of consideration of code violations. Paragraph 11 of Part III of the Academic Code of Ethics sets forth the academic standard for teaching staff: *Teaching staff shall observe and maintain academic integrity, and it shall not tolerate plagiarism, lifting, dishonest use of intellectual property or other violation of academic integrity.* However, academic integrity of students is set forth in Paragraph 17 of Part IV of the Academic Code of Ethics: *During studies and research, students shall observe the principles of academic integrity, and during studies they shall not avail to prohibited aids, plagiarism, lifting, falsification of data, dishonest use of intellectual property or cheating.* Part VI of the Academic Code of Ethics outlines the procedure of consideration of code violations, including failure to observe the principles academic integrity. The Academic Code of Ethics of RARZI is available on RARZI website and can be accessed by anyone, including students, teaching staff and employees.

Observation of the principles of academic integrity is also ensured with the Declaration of Academic Integrity, which is filled out during the process of writing of thesis by every student of the bachelor's and master's study programme (degree candidate), and which is envisaged in the [Regulations on Research Papers of RARZI](#) (available only in Latvian). With their signature each student confirms the following: 1) they have familiarised themselves with the Code of Ethics for Scientists (<https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/etika> (available only in Latvian)) and regulations on data protection, which are based on the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data, and their thesis complies with the principles of ethics and data protection requirements; 2) their thesis is written independently within the framework of studies at the study programme offered by RARZI, it contains references to all information sources, materials and data, including any prior work written and published by the student, it has not been submitted to any other commission or institution in any format and it has not been published; 3) in the process of writing, rights of third parties to private life and protection of personal data, have been observed; 4) restricted access information has not been used in writing the thesis; 5) the electronic copy of the thesis matches the printed and bound copy of the thesis. If any information indicated above is used in the thesis, the student should receive a written consent of the relevant natural or legal person and attach it to the thesis. Furthermore, at the end of the Declaration of Academic Integrity, the author of the thesis acknowledges that their thesis may be rejected, if the above-mentioned is false. With their signature degree candidate confirms that in case of violation they will assume the civil, administrative and criminal liability. Student is aware that their diploma may be annulled, if the violation of the principles of academic integrity is identified after awarding of the diploma.

In order to strengthen anti-plagiarism measures, RARZI is working on conclusion of an agreement on establishment of a uniform digital anti-plagiarism system. Electronic format and a hard copy of the thesis of degree candidate is publicly available at the library of RARZI. Thesis are written in close collaboration with supervising tutors and consultants. As the number of students at RARZI is small, the process of writing and the quality of thesis is very transparent. So far, no instances of plagiarism have been identified at RARZI. Furthermore, the responsibility for supervision of

academic integrity and research quality of thesis is shared with the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University. Thus, for example, electronic version of any master's thesis should be sent to the Faculty of Theology of the PLU a month before the defence and evaluation of the thesis.

Violation of the principles of academic integrity at RARZI, and plagiarism in particular, is considered as a serious violation. If a supervising tutor or a reviewer has suspicions about plagiarism, they are obliged to report it to the Directorate of RARZI and to facilitate the review of the report in a due time. Suspicions of violations are considered in accordance with the procedure set forth in Part VI of the Academic Code of Ethics of RARZI. 1) Violations are considered by the Board in consultation with the Council of RARZI Directorate which is composed of the Director, the Head of the Study Department, as well as a representative of lecturers (hereinafter referred to as the Ethics Commission) 2) The Ethics Commission devises rules of its conduct which are approved by the Council of RARZI. 3) The Ethics Commission assesses submissions and complaints filed about identified violations of academic ethics. It conducts an in-depth analysis of texts having the characteristics of plagiarism and makes a decision on measures to be taken in response to a violation. 4) The Ethics Commission drafts its opinion on the particular case. Without this opinion, the suspicious thesis cannot be defended. 5) If needed, the Ethics Commission may interview the author of the thesis in order to prevent any misunderstanding and mistake. 6) If the Ethics Commission confirms the presence of plagiarism, the student is not allowed to defend their thesis and the student is exmatriculated. 7) The student may submit a new thesis on another subject not earlier than after a year.

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

### **2.2.1. Assessment of the efficiency of the internal quality assurance system within the study field by specifying the measures undertaken to achieve the aims and outcomes of the study programmes and to ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes.**

Internal quality assurance is ensured in line with the Quality Policy of RARZI (see Section 1.3). Reporting on various levels and regular assessment are significant elements of quality assurance at RARZI. Meetings of the Council of the Institute devoted to reports on activity of the Institute in the main areas, including analysis on achievements and challenges are held at least twice a year. At the end of every academic year, RARZI gives full report on the past year to the Faculty of Theology of the PLU. Once in five years, the Director submits a full report on the activity of the Institute to the Moderator and afterwards to the Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the PLU; subsequently the report is submitted to the Dicastery for Culture and Education. Assessment of scientific and pedagogical qualifications, as well as tasks of academic personnel of RARZI is also carried out at least once in five years, concurrently with preparation of the five-year report of the Institute and its submission to the Faculty. Measures of assessment in RARZI are taken also on daily basis by gathering and analysing data during weekly meetings of the Directorate, as well as each semester in working groups of professors and meetings of the Head of the Study Department with students from each study year. Once a semester, the Head of the Study Department and the Director meet students from each study year for a discussion in order to hear wishes, complaints and problems of students and seek for solutions. During the accreditation period, official complaints about the content or quality of studies were not received; deficiencies indicated in surveys and personally

(regarding the format of lectures, study schedules) were addressed immediately.

In order to raise the quality, internal regulations are improved, content of study programmes is reviewed annually (opinions of students, graduates and employers are taken into account), as well as course descriptions and study methodology are updated and supplemented.

Quality of studies at RARZI is monitored by gathering and analysing the opinions of students, as well as in individual work with personnel.

**On the grounds of opinions gathered and analysis of the current situation, significant improvements to several areas were made during the accreditation period.**

In order to increase the capacity of teaching staff in didactics, RARZI and the Riga Stradiņš University organised a course on didactics in higher education institutions for teaching staff. New study courses (Civilian Defence and Environmental Protection) were launched, and a course on prevention of the vulnerable and minors was developed, approved and launched.

As a result of secondary education content reform commenced in 2016 (*School 2030*), RARZI stopped admitting students in the professional master's degree programme in religion, which used to provide qualification of a teacher of religious education and philosophy, because there were no longer any employment opportunities in this area in Latvia. Instead, RARZI invested efforts in strengthening the master's study programme awarding qualification of a pastoral counsellor, and led the restoration of professional standard of pastoral counsellor on a national level.

In order to maintain the level of quality during Covid-19 pandemic, teaching staff was trained to work online, part of computer supplies was modernised, and student surveys were organised to identify and eliminate weaknesses. RARZI also rapidly restructured its onsite format of studies and switched to remote studies with the help of Google Meet platform. These efforts ensured uninterrupted study process and guaranteed maintenance of quality standards.

In order to improve and enhance the quality of internship of students of the master's study programme, RARZI organised seminars together with entities offering internship opportunities. Among others, in 2019 a seminar for prison personnel was organised together with the Prison Administration and in 2020 a seminar for medical staff of the Riga East University Hospital was held. In order to raise the awareness of and increase the interest in religious music and the Christian culture heritage, RARZI organised the Summer Academy of Liturgical Music led by Franz Karl Prassl, professor at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome and the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz. In response to developments in the society, RARZI organised several international scientific conferences together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Embassy of Latvia in the Holy See. In May 2023, during the visit of cardinal Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, a conference was organised at the University of Latvia; in May 2016, a conference held at the University of Latvia was devoted to the visit to Latvia by cardinal Parolin, Vatican's Secretary of State; and in May 2019, RARZI published a Latvian translation of *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* and, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, organised at the University of Latvia a conference, which was attended by cardinal Turkson, prefect emeritus of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. In September 2018, RARZI took part in preparation of the visit of Pope Francis to the Baltic States, and in June 2021, RARZI, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Ambassador of Latvia to the Holy See, organised a conference devoted to centenary of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Latvia and the Holy See and opening of book *100 Years in the Spirit of Truth and Trust: Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Latvia and the Holy See*. Being aware that availability of theological and philosophical literature, as well as documents on teaching of the Church in Latvian language has

impact on the quality of study process, the Book Office of RARZI, together with publishing house *Vox Ecclesiae*, published the trilogy *Jesus of Nazareth* by Pope Benedict XVI in 2014, 2016 and 2020, in 2015 it published catechesis *Saint Paul the Apostle* by Pope Benedict XVI, in 2016 – *Catechesis on Prayer*, in 2016 – encyclical *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis, in 2015 – *Directory for Catechesis*, in 2016 – publication *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, in 2019 – work *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, in 2019 – book *Apostolic Visit of Pope Francis to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia: Address, Homilies and Interviews*, in 2021 – apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* by Pope Francis; furthermore, in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2020 it published *Terra Mariana*, research journal of RARZI and the Riga Institute of Theology, in 2018 – *Pentateuch* by Krestovsky, in 2018 – *Culture Betrayed by Its Own* by cardinal Jean Daniélou, in 2021 – apostolic constitution *Veritatis gaudium* by Pope Francis, in 2021 – *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*, a collection of Church documents on prevention of minors and the vulnerable, and in 2023 – a study book for catechists on Confirmation *The Witness*.

During the accreditation period, significant improvements were made to the study environment, which included the repair and renovation of the roof, modernisation and restoring of equipment, lighting and furniture in study rooms, as well as creating a lounge room for students. In response to student complaints about the supplies at the premises, during the accreditation period, a lounge room of students was improved. Furthermore, during the accreditation period, there was an optimisation of academic personnel, as well as the reading room of the library was repaired and equipped. RARZI has commenced introduction of the anti-plagiarism system.

With the aim to strengthen Catholic education in Latvia and to increase its quality, discussions were held on a model of a single institute, which unites RARZI and the Riga Institute of Theology, and an action strategy was devised for implementation of this plan. For the academic resources available in the intellectual area in Latvia to be used more efficiently and in order to facilitate ecumenical cooperation, RARZI concluded a cooperation agreement with the Luther Academy and in May 2023 organised a joint international scientific conference “Ecology of Spirit”. RARZI has discussed the opportunity of closer cooperation with the Faculty of Theology of the University of Latvia.

In order to increase the efficiency of RARZI and to improve the study environment at RARZI, in the light of expected merger of RARZI and the Riga Institute of Theology, RARZI moved from premises in the Old Town Riga to new premises at Katolū iela 18. This strategically significant change of location of RARZI opened up an opportunity to begin formation of a single Catholic education area together with the Riga Institute of Theology.

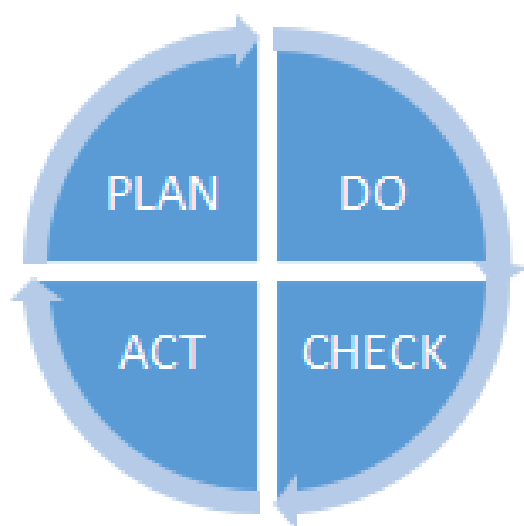
### **2.2.2. Analysis and assessment of the system and the procedures for the development and review of the study programmes by providing specific examples of the review of the study programmes, the aims, and regularity, as well as the stakeholders and their responsibilities. If, during the reporting period, new study programmes have been developed within the study field, describe the procedures of their development (including the process of the approval of study programmes).**

Any member of the society can initiate a development of a study programme in RARZI, and a new study programme is developed in the following successive stages:

- the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University makes a decision on the need to develop a new study programme;
- decision on the need to develop a study programme is harmonised by the Council of RARZI;

- proposal to develop a new study programme should contain the description of structure, content and learning outcomes of the programme, the qualification obtained, the description of job opportunities for graduates, the information about academic personnel, as well as material and technical resources and costs;
- documents needed for licencing of a study programme are coordinated with the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University;
- documents needed for licencing of a study programme are approved by the Council of RARZI, and licencing is initiated in accordance with the procedure in force in the Republic of Latvia;
- after a study programme is licenced, the Director of RARZI informs the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University about the outcome of the licencing and implementation of the study programme is commenced.

Quality assurance system for RARZI studies is based on Deming's continuous improvement cycle and comply with European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area It is ensured by the following documents:



- **Plan:** RARZI Strategy, Quality Policy, Code of Ethics.
- **Do:** Descriptions of study programmes and procedures defining study-related processes (internal regulations).
- **Check:** Reports and self-assessment reports.
- **Act:** potential amendments to the Strategy and internal normative regulations.

**Plan:** The Moderator and the Director of RARZI are responsible for strategic management. The Strategy for 2023-2027 is up to date at the time of drafting. The moderator, the director, the heads of the study units, the lecturers, the professors were involved in its elaboration. The views of students, alumni and employers were also taken into account throughout the process. The document was discussed at the Board of Directors and at the professors' meetings. The Strategy was approved by the Bishops' Conference of Latvia.

**Do:** The Director of RARZI ensures operations and implements development plans. The Director, in cooperation with the Moderator, ensures the liaison with the Dean of the Faculty of Theology and the Rector of the LPU, as well as the Dicastery for Catholic Education and Culture. The Director, in cooperation with the Moderator, shall also liaise with the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia Republic. The Director also ensures and develops links with other universities of a similar profile in Latvia, Europe and the USA. The Director is responsible for the elaboration of documentation

regulating the content and process of studies, planning the study process, as well as organising its implementation. Quality assurance procedures for higher education include activities for the elaboration of study programmes, the implementation of the study process and regular evaluation, as defined in the internal normative acts of RARZI. In order to attract international funding, the Director cooperates with the Project Manager and the President of the Latvian Bishops' Conference in coordinating the elaboration, application, implementation and reporting of projects. The Director works in close cooperation with the Head of Studies and holds weekly operational meetings of the Board of Directors. In order to ensure the quality of theses, BC and MA theses, the Director, Head of the Study Department convenes once a semester meetings of the extended Directorate, attended by professors and associate professors, to review the themes of the theses, agree on the thesis supervisors, the process for the defence of the thesis and other issues related to the quality assurance of the thesis.

**Check:** As RARZI has only one study field, the principles for its development and monitoring are included in the RARZI Strategy. The supervision of the study field is carried out primarily by the Faculty of Theology of LPU, the Bishops' Conference of Latvia represented by the moderator of RARZI, the RARZI Council. Quality control of RARZI is carried out through different levels of reporting. First of all, at the meetings of the Institute Council, which take place at least twice during the academic year and are attended by the moderator as representative of the LBC, the Director who chairs the meeting, the Head of the Study Department, all professors and associate professors, two student representatives, at least one employer. The RARZI Council meetings are held to report on the Institute's work in key areas, including an analysis of achievements and challenges. Also, at the end of each academic year, the Institute provides a full report on the past year to the Faculty of Theology of LPU. Every five years, the Director gives a full report on the life of the Institute, first to the Moderator, then to the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at LPU, and then to the Dicastery for Catholic Education and Culture. The evaluation of the scientific and pedagogical qualifications of the academic staff of RARZI and the review of the work assignments also take place at least every five years, at the same time as the preparation and submission of the Institute's five-year report to the Faculty of Theology of LPU. The RARZI verification principle is also implemented in the daily work process by collecting and analysing data at weekly Directorate meetings, during the semester in working groups of professors and in discussions with students of each course by the Head of the Study Department. Once a semester, the Head of the Study Department, in cooperation with the Director, meets with the students of each course for a consultation in order to listen to the students' wishes, complaints, problems and to find a solution to them.

**Act:** Based on the different levels of scrutiny, RARZI's development objectives and decisions on what to do next are taken and, where necessary, coordinated with RARZI's related decision-making bodies. The implementation of the Strategy is subject to regular monitoring by the Board of Directors (once a quarter), the Council of the Institute (two or three times a year) and the Latvian Bishops' Conference (once a year).

The process of elaboration of a new study programme is defined in [RARZI's Management Regulations of the Study Field and Study programme](#) (information available only in Latvian) 15.-16. articles. The elaboration of the study programme includes the decision about the development of a new programme, stages of elaboration and coordination with participation of all involved parties.

### **2.2.3. Description of the procedures and/or systems according to which the students are expected to submit complaints and proposals (except for the surveys to be conducted**

**among the students). Specify whether and how the students have access to the information on the possibilities to submit complaints and proposals and how the outcomes of the examination of the complaints and proposals and the improvements of the study field and the relevant study programmes are communicated by providing the respective examples.**

Procedure for submitting student complaints and initiatives is set forth in the normative document on the [Procedure for Submitting and Processing of Student Initiatives and Complaints at the Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University](#) (available only in Latvian). It determines the format for submission of initiatives and complaints by students, individually or in groups, in writing or electronically, likewise it determines the procedure for examination of complaints and initiatives. Initiatives and complaints may be submitted by students to the Director, the Moderator or the Board of RARZI. RARZI tries to address the initiatives and resolve complaints by the Council of the Directorate and provide a reply no later than within one month. If the person submitting the initiative or complaint is dissatisfied with the reply, he/she has the right to resubmit the initiative or complaint to the Board of RARZI. If necessary, the matter is referred to the Board of RARZI.

RARZI ensures that students have the right not only to submit complaints and initiatives, but also to request a re-evaluation of the grade received in a test, if the student believed that errors or serious procedural violations have been committed during the test or during the evaluation of the test. In this case, the student's application is examined by the Appeal Commission composed of at least two neutral members of teaching staff. Decision of the Appeal Commission may, in turn, be appealed to the Board of RARZI. This procedure is set forth in the [Rules for Evaluation of Student Achievements at the Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University](#) (available only in Latvian).

Student initiatives and complaints received during the cyclical monitoring of observance of internal control mechanisms, complaint submission and decision-making procedures, as well as students' rights and interests are gathered and reviewed once a year by the Council of RARZI, which assesses the overall trends of complaints and initiatives and the need to take action for improving institutional and study quality.

Examples of complaints/proposals and solutions:

- Dissatisfaction with the lecturer's behaviour during a course of study by setting tests at unscheduled times. Solution: after receiving information from an anonymous survey, the head of the study department discusses with the lecturer of the specific course and points out the problem. The lecturer draws conclusions and in the future schedules the examinations on time.
- Conflict situation regarding dissatisfaction with the lecturer's assessment of the course. Solution: In such a conflict situation, an independent assessor in the relevant specialty is called in. The student is satisfied with the resolution of the situation and the objective assessment. The student's suspicion that the course lecturer is subjective in his/her assessment is allayed.
- After RARZI moved from the Old Town to its current address, complaints were received about the impossibility of having meals near the Institute or on the premises of the Institute. Solution: A student break room was set up on the ground floor, where takeaway meals, tea and coffee can be heated in the microwave.
- Frustration during the COVID-19 pandemic with the need to switch to remote working due to

insufficient technical preparedness. Solution: A training session on the use of the Google Meet platform was conducted by a specialist for each course. This was followed by individual work with those students who had difficulties connecting or using the platform. After the Covid 19 pandemic, the Student Council expressed the wish of the students to extend the scope of the retreat.

**2.2.4. Provide information on the mechanism for collecting the statistical data, as developed by the higher education institution/ college. Specify the type of data to be collected, the regularity of collection, and the way the information is used to improve the study field. Describe the mechanism for obtaining and providing feedback, including with regard to the work with the students, graduates, and employers.**

In order to ensure high-quality activity and decision making at RARZI, gathering and analysis of necessary data is used. Statistical data is gathered via surveys, individual discussions and general meetings. The data are gathered, and, on the grounds of data analysis, the activity of RARZI is improved and further developed.

**Applicants**

- Individual interview about the motivation to study and sources, where information was found, as well as the quality of application and registration process (participants – the Director, the chaplain, the Head of the Study Department or a representative of professors).
- At the beginning of academic year, a summary of the number of applicants and admitted students, as well as data characterising their profile are prepared for the general meeting of teaching staff. Applicant and student profile data includes data on previous education, scientific degree held, previous education institution attended and a year of graduation, as well as grades received at the previous education institution. Furthermore, data on the number applicants to each study programme are gathered.

**Students and study programmes**

- At the end of each academic year, student survey on satisfaction with the study environment and quality of study process is conducted. This survey provides information that helps preventing weaknesses and thus make relevant improvements. The survey determines the opinion of students about the content of courses, the quality of the work of teaching staff, the quality of the content and organisation of internship, work of the library and cooperation with the chaplain and administration of RARZI.
- Regular meetings with students from each study year are scheduled once a year (participants – the Director, the Head of the Study Department, the chaplain), in order to jointly identify challenges and problems in the study process, to urge and encourage students to draft and submit their research papers and essays on time.
- Individual consultations (participants – the Head of the Study Department, member of the teaching staff, the chaplain or the Director). Each student can request an individual consultation in order to address issues related to studies, for example, to set an individual tuition fee payment schedule in case of financial hardship, to receive spiritual and psychological support in discussions with the chaplain of RARZI, to address problems with supervising tutors or members of teaching staff delivering a particular course. Most often, individual consultations most clearly reveal the main reasons for dropping out. RARZI pays particular attention to this aspect because due response can facilitate decrease in the



number of dropouts. RARZI is a small higher education institution, and that enables personal and individual approach to all students. If decision to give up studies does not have any objective reason, solutions are found during the individual

- During each semester, data on progress and learning outcomes of each student are gathered, namely, data on fulfilment of study programme in accordance with requirements set for learning outcomes in each semester, in each section of courses (compulsory, elective compulsory and other sections that are envisaged in the structure of programme). These data are analysed and discussed at the extended meetings of the Directorate.
- At the end of each semester, data on progress in drafting research papers are analysed together with supervising tutors of term papers, as well as supervising tutors of bachelor's and master's thesis.
- At the end of each semester, the Head of the Study Department gathers data on the amount of academic debts measured in credit points and distribution of academic debts among study courses.
- Prior to examinations and defence or preliminary defence of research papers, meeting of tuition-fee payment schedule envisaged by the study contract is assessed.

## **Personnel**

Data on academic and administrative personnel are gathered via surveys, during individual discussions and general meetings, as well as by recording demographic and other information. At the beginning of each academic year, academic personnel meets at the general meeting, where information about the results of student, graduate and employer surveys is shared. Evaluation of each member of teaching staff is anonymous; however, each member of teaching staff can find out the evaluation of their performance by making a request to the Head of the Study Department. The Director, the Head of the Study Department or a member of teaching staff can initiate individual discussions on the survey, as well as suggestions and identified problems. Teaching staff and the Directorate regularly hold joint meetings to address specific tasks of the study process. During these meetings, issues highlighted by teaching staff and related to proceedings of the study course are addressed. Academic and administrative personnel also gather for fellowship events during the Advent Season and for biannual recollections, which are an informal platform for discussions on development issues of RARZI. The key issues of the year, strategic matters and problems are discussed and addressed at the meetings of the Council of RARZI, which are held at least twice a year and additionally on ad-hoc basis. Cooperation within the administration of RARZI actively takes place on daily basis and during the regular meetings of the Directorate, where wishes, complaints and initiatives of employees are considered. The administrative reform, which was implemented in 2022, resulted in having a small number of employees and a good team; therefore, information and opinion exchange is fast and qualitative.

## **Graduates**

- It is essential for RARZI to know the opinion of the graduates. Therefore, a survey among graduates of the respective study year is conducted and it is expected to introduce a survey for those who have graduated the previous year. The goal of these surveys is to determine the level of satisfaction among graduates, their opinion about the quality of the programme, their opinion about knowledge, skills and competences acquired at RARZI and their opinion about the relevance of the diploma awarded by RARZI in the labour market.
- During the Advent Season, RARZI holds annual fellowship events, where graduates can share their experiences and suggestions.
- RARZI is particularly interested in graduates of the bachelor's study programme and holdings individual discussions with them, because they are the most likely students of master's study programme.

## Employers

RARZI has developed a close cooperation with employers. Employers' feedback helps determining the level of satisfaction among employers with the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by the graduates of RARZI and their compliance with the needs of the work place. Often employers also provide internship opportunities; thus, RARZI and employers develop good cooperation and get acquainted with each other already during the student internship. The Head of the Study Department and the Director maintain regular communication with employers offering internship opportunities, by *inter alia* taking note of their assessment and suggestions regarding the quality of work performed by RARZI graduates. Representatives of employers are always present at the meetings of the Council of RARZI, where they are invited to share their opinions, suggestions and criticism.

## Realisation of strategic goals

At the end of each academic year, the Director of the Study Field together with the Head of the Study Department prepare a report on the study field and relevant study programmes during the relevant academic year. This report *inter alia* contains summary and analysis of statistical data. Information gathered is used in assessment and further development of the study field. This information is presented to the Council of RARZI, as well as submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the PLU. The report contains data on the number of students in study programmes, number of admitted students, number of graduates, dropout rate, as well as data on incoming, outgoing and internship mobility. It also contains a summary on the composition of teaching staff, number of members of the academic personnel holding a doctorate degree, Erasmus+ mobility, as well as recently launched courses. Measures to be taken for achievement of strategic goals are addressed both at the extended meetings of the Directorate and at the meetings of the Council of RARZI. The largest amount of data is gathered for the five-year report of RARZI. This report is drafted by the Directors of the Study Field and the Head of the Study Department. The report is presented to and approved by the Council of RARZI, and afterwards it is forwarded to the Faculty of Theology of the PLU.

**2.2.5. Specify the websites (e.g., the homepage) on which the information on the study field and the relevant study programmes is published (in all languages in which the study programmes are implemented) by indicating the persons responsible for the compliance of the information available on the website with the information published in the official registers (State Education Information System (VIIS), E-platform).**

The website of RARZI ([www.rarzi.lv](http://www.rarzi.lv) (information available in Latvian)) is aimed at communication with both potential and enrolled students, staff members of RARZI, cooperation partners and the society at large, because it offers information on the mission, activity and study programmes offered, as well as highlights of RARZI.

There are the following sections on the website:

- RARZI.LV
- WINSTUDENTS
- ADMISSION
- FOR STUDENTS
- CHAPLAIN OF RARZI

- LIBRARY
- INSTITUTE
- INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
- SCIENCE AND RESEARCH
- CENTRE OF CATECHESIS
- CONTACTS
- EVENTS
- ENGLISH

Section **RARZI.LV** contains information about the history of the Institute, the Congregation for Catholic Education of Vatican and accreditation of the study field. It also gives an opportunity for enrolled and potential students to get acquainted with the schedule of lectures and calendar of RARZI events. Besides that, this section contains contact information, working hours of RARZI office and banking details of RARZI. At the bottom of this section, there is a map of the website.

Section **WINSTUDENTS** is intended for limited accessibility information about the students of RARZI. Contents of this section are not available to a wider public.

The target audience of section **ADMISSION** is potential students, and this section provides information on study programmes offered by RARZI and the life-long learning and distance learning opportunities, requirements and procedure of admission, registration forms, as well as other admission-related information.

Section **FOR STUDENTS** contains full schedule of lectures in all study programmes, regulatory documents related to studies, for example, the Rules of Internal Order for Students, the Regulations on Research Work of Students, the Rules on Tuition Fees, the Procedure for Discontinuing/Resuming Studies and other regulatory enactments. This section also provides information on self-government of students and samples of useful submissions.

Section **CHAPLAIN OF RARZI** provides information about the opportunity to schedule a discussion, spiritual guidance or confession with the chaplain of RARZI, as well as it contains information on the times of Holy Mass.

Section **LIBRARY** contains all the information needed for access to RARZI library, namely, working hours of the library, links to digital catalogues of resources and thesis, information about paid services offered by the library, information about recent publications, as well as rules of the library and other useful links.

Section **INSTITUTE** shares information about the most significant documents of RARZI, namely, the mission, the Strategy, the Statutes, the Regulations, the Academic Code of Ethics, the Privacy Policy, the Ecology Policy and *Reglamento* or the Rules on Implementation of Regulations. This section also provides information about the administration and teaching staff of RARZI and their contact details.

**INTERNATION COOPERATION** is a section intended for students who are interested in opportunities offered by Erasmus+ student mobility. This section is also intended for potential visiting students, as it contains information in English about the study programmes, catalogues of courses available at bachelor's and master's study programmes, description of credit point and evaluation systems, as well as sample forms of study and internship mobility contracts. In this section, students and teaching staff of RARZI interested in taking part in Erasmus+ programme can learn about the implementation of Erasmus+ programme, the Regulations for Erasmus+ Student Competition, the student application form for participation in Erasmus programme, as well as the guidelines of this mobility programme, namely, the Erasmus Student Charter, the Erasmus Policy Statement and the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education for 2014 – 2020 and for 2021 – 2027.

Section **SCIENCE AND RESEARCH** describes the field of research at RARZI and resources available for it.

Section **CENTRE OF CATECHESIS** is a site of the Methodology Centre of Catechesis, which currently contains contact information of the Centre, as well as a video material providing an insight into the events organised by the Centre.

**CONTACTS** section provides contact and banking details of RARZI.

Section **EVENTS** contains highlights of RARZI, as well as information on past and planned events, which are added to the calendar of RARZI.

Section **ENGLISH** offers a short description in English about the history and current activity of RARZI, as well as about its goals and study opportunities offered. It also provides information to foreign students about mobility opportunities available within the framework of Erasmus+, including the Language Policy of RARZI.

The Director of RARZI is responsible for ensuring that the information available on the website corresponds to the information available in the official registers (VIIS and E-platform).

## 2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

**2.3.1. Provide information on the system developed by the higher education institution/college for determining and redistribution of the financial resources required for the implementation of the study field and the relevant study programmes. Provide data on the available funding for the scientific research and/or artistic creation activities, its sources and its use for the development of the study field.**

Successful implementation of the study field requires financial resources that can ensure the entire study process. Such resources are needed for remuneration of academic and administrative staff, supplementing the library collection, as well as other direct and indirect costs related to studies. Financial resources are needed also for further development of the study field. Remuneration of teaching staff and costs related to organisation of studies are the main direct costs related to ensuring studies.

Remuneration of academic personnel includes cost of contact hours (for example, lectures and seminars), costs of supervising independent studies, costs of consultations and examinations, methodology-related costs (costs of preparing new courses, etc.), costs of supervising and assessing thesis, as well as reviewing thesis, costs of supervising and organising internship, costs of teaching staff's scientific work, including professional growth, (exchange visits, training) needed for devising new study materials.

Costs related to organisation of studies include the remuneration of administrative personnel, taxes, material supplies needed for work, IT support.

Other costs are costs directly related to a particular study programme, for example, costs of assets and services, which include material, technical and methodological supplies, including technical equipment and visual aids, needed for a study programme.

Each annual budget of RARZI contains funding earmarked for purchase of literature, as well as subscription to electronic databases and publications, which are made available to both the staff and the students. Each year, 2-4% of annual income is earmarked for purchase of books needed for a particular study programme; the Foundation Board decides on the specific amount of allocated funds.

In order to determine the amount of necessary financial resources, RARZI calculates the prime cost of each study programme by taking into account all of the above-mentioned costs related to studies. This calculation is reflected in the financial description of the study field as well. The funding available to the study field is sufficient. Sources of funding and use of the funds is supervised by the Foundation Board.

Costs of infrastructure needed for the study field are fully covered by the Catholic Church of Latvia, which directly covers the costs related to maintenance and improvement of premises, as well as utilities. These costs are not taken into account in financial calculations and are not reflected in the annual report of RARZI. In general, the funding needed for the study field is obtained in equal amounts from the following sources: 1) Bishops' Conference of Latvia; 2) foreign Catholic foundations (for example, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Papal Foundation and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops); 3) tuition fees (for example, in academic year 2022/2023, the annual tuition fee for bachelor's degree was EUR 800, and for master's degree – EUR 960). The amount of tuition fee is set forth in the contract signed between RARZI and the student upon commencing the studies, and it remains unchanged throughout the entire period of studies. The study contract also sets forth the schedule of payments.

The amount of tuition fee is reviewed biennially by the Foundation Board by taking into consideration the economic situation in the state. Changes in the amount of tuition fee do not affect students who have already concluded their study contracts.

Specific projects, funded with the support of German Catholic foundations (*Renovabis, Bonifatiuswerk, Kirche in Not*), are implemented for support and development of the study field. Funds from these projects are used for research, as well as development of the study field and relevant study programmes, namely, funding of devising and approbation of new study courses, support for scientific research, funding of conferences, symposiums and continuing education, as well as funding of devising study and methodological materials, translation and publication of Church documents. These sources of funding are stable and long-term (they have been available since the establishment of RARZI) and they facilitate the financial stability.

Activity of RARZI is not commercial and is not aimed at gaining profit. The lack of state funding causes significant fluctuations in financial indicators, which have been affected by the financial crisis, relocation to new premises and relocation-related costs, as well as Covid-19 pandemic. All of these circumstances rapidly decreased the paying capacity of students and income of the Catholic Church of Latvia, thus affecting its financial capabilities. In such situations, additional solutions are sought and found to retain the number of students and academic staff, as well as to continue the activity of RARZI. Cost-effectiveness also depends on the difference between the costs of each student and the tuition fee paid.

The cost of one study place in the academic year 2021/2022 was: in the Bachelor's programme - EUR 2,676.69, in the Master's programme - EUR 4,282.56, consisting of:

1. Wages - 80%
2. materials for the teaching process - 10%
- Other expenses - 10%

RARZI research is basically a component of the employment contract.

Wage bill	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	86 588 EUR	86 969 EUR	81 297 EUR	81 826 EUR	75 745 EUR	84 364 EUR

Research is funded from external sources, mainly from project funds, as well as from funds raised individually by academic staff through their professional activities.

Year	External sources of funding	Research funding
2022	<i>Renovabis</i>	7400 EUR 6800 EUR
2021	United States Conference of Bishops	12 000 EUR
2020	<i>Renovabis</i>	8000 EUR
2019	<i>Bonifatius Werk</i>	19 000EUR
2018	<i>Bonifatius Werk</i>	18 000 EUR
2017	<i>Renovabis</i> <i>Bonifatius Werk</i>	21 000 EUR 8000 EUR

**2.3.2. Provide information on the infrastructure and the material and technical provisions required for the implementation of the study field and the relevant study programmes. Specify whether the required provision is available to the higher education institution/ college, available to the students, and the teaching staff.**

Study programmes in the study field are taught in proper study rooms in the building complex located at Katoļu iela 16/18. RARZI has concluded lease agreements with the owner of premises for part-time studies and holds classes on Friday evenings and Saturdays. The total space of study rooms is 300.6 m<sup>2</sup>. From Monday to Friday afternoon, the study rooms are used by the Riga Institute of Theology and the Inter-diocesan Theological Seminary.

Six equipped study rooms suitable for groups of 10 to 30 people (area between 18.3 m<sup>2</sup> and 56.9 m<sup>2</sup>) are used for studies. Room furnishings were renewed in 2019 and can be easily transformed. Comfortable lounges are available to students and teaching staff. The total area of administrative and ancillary rooms is 157.3 m<sup>2</sup>.

Study rooms are equipped with information technologies required for a modern study process. Three study rooms are equipped with built-in projectors, and there are mobile projectors in two study rooms. One study room is equipped with an interactive display board. There are computers and wireless internet in all study rooms.

A project for installing stationary IT equipment needed for conferences/video conferences in one of the largest rooms of the building complex in 2023 has been drafted and approved.

Material and technical supplies for the study field and relevant study programmes and their availability to students and teaching staff is considered sufficient for the needs of the study field. Infrastructure of RARZI and available material and technical supplies enable successful implementation of study programmes of the study field.

**2.3.3. Provide information on the system and procedures for the improvement and purchase of the methodological and informative provision. Description and assessment of the availability of the library and the databases to the students (including in digital environment) and their compliance with the needs of the study field by specifying whether the opening times of the library are appropriate for the students, as well as the number/area of the premises, their suitability for individual studies and research work, the services provided by the library, the available literature for the implementation of the study field, the databases available for the students in the respective field, the statistical data on their use, the procedures for the replenishment of the library stock, as well as the procedures and possibilities for the subscription to the databases.**

Methodological and information resources match the content for the study field and are appropriate for part-time studies. Students and teaching staff of RARZI have access to a library, which is shared with the Riga Institute of Theology and Inter-diocesan Theological Seminary. The library collection consists of approximately 80 000 books, including more than 10 000 books published before 1900, as well as a wide range of periodicals (more than 15 000). More than a half of the books are in English, German, French, Italian or Polish language because the amount of publications in the field of theology available in Latvian is limited. Part of the books in foreign languages has been received as donations from abroad. The collection of books is regularly supplemented in line with the Development Strategy of RARZI; necessary books in psychology and pastoral counselling are purchased.

The library occupies a space of 339.6 m<sup>2</sup>. It is situated in two buildings at Katoļu iela 16. Working hours of the library are adjusted to the needs of students. It works from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm on weekday evenings, from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm on Fridays and from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturdays. The library is available to students and teaching staff from August till the end of June. Due to the small number of students, it is possible to agree with the librarian or the Head of the Book Office of RARZI on individual access to the library.

There is a wide range of methodological materials available in the library. Students have an opportunity to take these materials home for a specific period or they can study them in the reading room. Students can use consultations offered by the library and order literature from other libraries. The reading room has a wide range of reference literature, students have an opportunity to use computers, and internet connection is provided. Certain extracts and methodological materials can be copied and scanned. Copying and scanning is provided at cost price.

RARZI and the Riga Institute of Theology jointly subscribe to EBSKO database which is available to students and teaching staff both in reading rooms and remotely. In order for the library collection to meet the requirements of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, the Strategy of the Institute, as well as the needs of students, the reference materials used during courses are assessed and teaching staff is informed about the available reference materials required for courses. Library

resources are supplemented and databases are subscribed to within the framework of the budget of the library, which is approved by the Foundation Board (2-4% of annual income of RARZI is earmarked for purchase of books and periodicals, and separate funds are allocated for database subscriptions). The choice of necessary information resources is determined by the study field and the Dicastery for Culture and Education. In order to purchase the printed and electronic resources need for study courses, the description of courses is analysed and checked against the available library collection. Afterwards, on the grounds of the results of analysis, the survey of teaching staff is conducted. The final decision on supplementation of library collection is made jointly by the librarian and a professor appointed by the group of professors; this decision is approved by the Director of RARZI.

Subscription to databases is decided in a collegial discussion of a group of professors. The subscribed database should match several pre-set criteria, it should contain publications in the field of philosophy, theology, including Catholic theology, as well as psychology, pedagogy and social sciences. This decision is approved by the Director and the Moderator of RARZI.

The goal of the library is to become as a collection of references focussed on religion and theology, to develop its infrastructure with modern technologies and, in collaboration with teaching staff, to provide the most recent literature in the field of psychology, pedagogy, social sciences and research needed for the study process.

Using the EBSCO database

RIGA HIGHER INSTITUTE OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCE

Year	Database Sessions	Total Searches	Total Full-Text Requests	Abstract Requests
2022	476	1951	180	142
2021	201	661	57	70
2020	56	199	81	50

**2.3.4. Provide a description and assessment of information and communication technology solutions used in the study process (e.g., MOODLE). If the study programmes within the study field are implemented in distance learning, the tools specially adapted for this form of study must also be indicated.**

The study process is mainly conducted through onsite classes because studies in religion and theology envisage not only intellectual growth but also spiritual formation. Thus, the possibility of students to meet and to be in a dialogue with teaching staff is particularly essential. The



significance of onsite classes is emphasised in Pope Francis' Apostolic Constitution [Veritatis Gaudium on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties](#) (information available in Latvian) and is binding to RARZI. Meanwhile, RARZI offers an opportunity to the entire teaching staff and all students to use email domain @rarzi.lv, and it posts the highlights on its website [www.rarzi.lv](http://www.rarzi.lv) (information available in Latvian). When necessary, Google Meet or Zoom platforms are used for remote classes.

Students and staff of RARZI can use computers with MS Office 365 software available at the premises of the Institute. MS Office 365 ensures students and staff with the best tools needed in the modern study process, for example, Outlook, Word, Excel and PowerPoint software. Students and staff have access to 20 computers, and wireless internet is provided to those using their own laptops. All computers at RARZI are connected to a local computer network and internet. There is a wireless internet available at the premises of RARZI.

Diverse multimedia technical solutions are used in preparation and presentation of study materials and data visualisation, namely, study rooms are equipped with projectors, screens and sound equipment, there are two mobile projectors, there are two laptops, which can be connected to mobile projectors without the need for any additional stationary equipment.

Since 2020, video conference platforms Google Meet and Zoom are used to ensure remote studies. Computers in study rooms are equipped with microphones, speakers and web cameras. In 2023, RARZI concluded a contract with a private company on provision of IT support services; online study platform is being developed for implementation, and IT equipment is being updated and modernised.

In order to improve the infrastructure and IT resources needed for the study process in line with the Development Strategy of RARZI, a special group composed of academic and administrative staff has been established. The Foundation Board assesses and approves the annual funding allocated for these needs. The funding is allocated for purchase of fixed assets, including software, as well as maintenance and update of network and servers. In 2023, pursuant to the decision of the Foundation Board, a project on digitalisation was drafted and submitted to the German Catholic foundation *Kirche in Not*. The project was approved and will be implemented by the end of 2023. It envisages setting up a modern conference room suitable for online conferences, as well as creation of a modern study platform.

### **2.3.5. Provide information on the procedures for attracting and/or employing the teaching staff (including the call for vacancies, employment, election procedure, etc.), and the assessment of their transparency.**

Attraction and hiring of teaching staff (including advertising of vacancies, election procedure, etc.) is set forth in the [Regulations of RARZI](#). The Regulations state that academic staff is composed of professors (in Italian *docenti stabili ordinari*), associate professors (in Italian – *docenti stabili straordinari*), and other teaching staff, which includes docents, lecturers, visiting professors, visiting docents and visiting lecturers.

Academic staff vacancies are advertised in the information systems of the Catholic Church. Applicants have to file the required documents with the Office of the Institute, and the documents are reviewed by the Council of the Institute. In case of a positive vote, the documents are forwarded to the Faculty of Theology of the PLU. After reviewing the filed documents, the Faculty

gives its opinion, declares that it has no objection (*nulla osta*) against the appointment of the applicant to the relevant academic position, or rejects the applicant. In case of a positive opinion of the Faculty, the Moderator (the Archbishop) appoints the applicant to the relevant academic position.

Applicants for academic positions are assessed in an open competition on the grounds of uniform criteria. The following criteria are assessed: education, professional experience, teaching experience, scientific and creative activity, communication skills, compliance with requirements set for receiving *nulla osta* consent from the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University. Each member of teaching staff can apply for the advertised vacancy if they match the set criteria. The Moderator appoints professors, associate professors, docents and lecturers after receiving *nulla osta* (no objections) consent from the Faculty and consultations with the Council of RARZI.

Docent of RARZI must hold a doctorate degree from a canonically recognised faculty or have an equivalent degree, or, in case of licentiate's degree holder, must have an extensive practical experience.

Members of academic personnel qualify for the position of an associate professor of RARZI if they have broad knowledge, exemplary moral life and sense of responsibility for ecclesiastic and academic life, hold a doctorate degree from a canonically recognised faculty or have an equal academic degree, have attested to their skills in lecturing by fulfilling the duties of a teaching staff (*incaricato*) for at least three years, have proven the ability to conduct research with relevant scientific publications and have received a consent from their bishop (*proprio ordinario*).

Members of academic personnel qualify for the position of a professor of RARZI if they, in addition to criteria set for a position of associate professor, have given lectures in the relevant study field in the position of associate professor for at least three years and have had scientific publications which attest to the progress in the respective field. Professors are not allowed to hold a permanent lectureship in another ecclesial or civilian institution.

Members of academic personnel qualify for the position of a lecturer of RARZI if they hold a doctorate or master's degree from a canonically recognised faculty or have an equivalent degree and have received a consent from bishop (*proprio ordinario*). In exceptional circumstances, lecturers may hold only a bachelor's degree, but they must have an extensive practical experience in the relevant field. Lecturers are appointed by the Moderator after receiving *nulla osta* consent from the Faculty and consultations with the Council of the Institute.

Visiting professors, visiting docents and visiting lecturers are members of academic staff, which are invited from other higher education institutions.

The position of guest lecturers should be singled out, as usually guest lecturers are specialists, which are needed for a particular course and which are not required to receive a consent from the Faculty, for example, guest lecturers for the course on civilian defence. Pursuant to the Regulations of RARZI, such lecturers may be appointed by the Moderator, or, in extraordinary circumstances, by the Director of RARZI.

**2.3.6. Specify whether there are common procedures for ensuring the qualification of the academic staff members and the work quality in place and provide the respective assessment thereof. Specify the options for all teaching staff members to improve their qualifications (including the information on the involvement of the teaching staff in different activities, the incentives for their involvement, etc.). Provide the respective examples and specify the way the added value of the possibilities used for the**

## **implementation of the study process and the improvement of the study quality is evaluated.**

There is a uniform procedure established at RARZI for assessment of qualifications and quality of academic staff. This procedure is set forth in both the [Regulations](#) and the [Development Strategy](#) of RARZI. Facilitation of qualification improvement is a significant part of overall facilitation of development of academic staff. Qualification improvement influences the quality of studies. Tools, which support the professional development and scientific activity, ensure the transfer of new knowledge and experience to the content of study courses, and students are offered topical subjects for their independent work and research. For example, in the framework of scientific projects, teaching staff and students form research groups, which conduct studies and draft publications on subjects topical to the society and the Church. Students of any of the two available study levels are regularly taking part in research projects together with their scientific supervising tutors. The results of these projects are presented at the scientific conferences of students. Feedback on topicality of each study course is received by organising student surveys. In their responses to open-ended questions, students express their opinion on the competence of a particular member of teaching staff and the topicality of the subjects covered by the study course.

With the aim to facilitate the development of its academic staff, on several occasions RARZI has organised lectures and seminars where the Moderator, the Director or professors share with their colleagues the experience gathered at the conferences organised by the Pontifical Lateran University and the information on documents of the Church and instructions for further activity of the Institute. During the reporting period, eight members of RARZI teaching staff took part in conferences organised by the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome. Personal assistance is provided to members of teaching staff in work with information resources, Google Meet online platform, as well as other matters.

RARZI supports and facilitates the research activity of its academic staff by granting vacations for conducting research and by supporting education initiatives, which deepen their didactic experience. In 2022, a continuing education course was organised for the academic staff of RARZI and the Riga Institute of Theology; the 60-hour course on Student-Centred Teaching and Learning in Higher Education was provided by the academic staff of the Centre for Educational Growth of the Riga Stradiņš University. Participants of the course attended onsite and remote classes, dialogues and discussions, learned about the goals and tasks of student-centred education, as well as learned about various didactical methods and approaches. The content of the course covered such areas as learning and teaching philosophy and evidence-based learning, it provided an insight into the Bologna Process and the European Education Area, and touched upon higher education system in Latvia, and internal and external quality assessment. The teaching staff had an opportunity to develop their skills in defining and mapping of learning outcomes and learn about the backward design characteristics. During the course, it was possible to learn about the active learning and teaching methods, interactive learning and teaching tools, as well as study material design principles. Particular emphasis was placed on assessment of learning outcomes, as well as the role of feedback and feedforward. This continuing education course was successfully completed by 19 members of RARZI teaching staff.

RARZI is regularly assessing the scientific activity of its teaching staff by evaluating the results of research, participation in projects, as well as pedagogical and organisational work. Content of study programmes requires continuous updating of courses in response to topical problems in life, which are viewed from the perspective of Catholic Church teaching. Therefore, academic staff takes part

in various projects and uses project results in supplementing and updating of the content of study courses. Teaching staff takes part in researches, scientific and practical conferences and seminars, as well as participates in the work of non-governmental organisations and associations by organising scientific and educational events, in which the graduates are involved as well. Information and experience gathered during scientific events is used in teaching courses and supervising research work, as well as in preparing study materials. This adds value to the quality of study process and helps students to understand the processes and issues topical to the Church and the society.

**2.3.7. Provide information on the number of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the relevant study programmes of the study field, as well as the analysis and assessment of the academic, administrative (if applicable) and research workload.**

Teaching staff involved in implementation of the study field is highly qualified. Out of 38 members of academic staff (including visiting professors, visiting docents and visiting lecturers, as well as guest lecturers), 19 (50 %) hold a doctorate degree. Fourteen of them have been awarded their degree by higher education institutions in the United States, Italy, Belgium, France or Poland. All holders of licentiate's degree continue studies or work on their doctoral thesis in higher education institutions in Italy or France.

Specifics of the study field requires attraction of high-level specialists in theology. They are mainly Catholic priests, which have been elected to the Riga Institute of Theology and teach relevant courses for RARZI students as visiting professors and visiting lecturers.

There are 13 members of teaching staff elected for the study field. Eight of them (61,5%) are Doctors of Sciences, four hold a licentiate's degree and one hold a master's degree. Out of eight holders of a degree of Doctor of Sciences, four are professors, three are associate professors and one is docent.

Teaching staff involved in implementation of the study field and study programmes is highly qualified and capable; the teaching staff has attested to their qualifications and abilities during the long-term cooperation, therefore, changes in the composition of teaching staff are insignificant.

RARZI also invites guest lecturers, which hold master's degree and teach specific courses, for example, a course on civilian defence, or substitute teaching staff members on temporary leave.

Rarzi's teaching load is low, with no teaching staff member having a full teaching load with the current number of students. The issue of overload of teachers can only arise in cases where teachers who are also priests in the parishes have a heavy pastoral workload alongside their teaching. Such cases are rare and are dealt with by the moderator (Archbishop).

**2.3.8. Assessment of the support available for the students, including the support provided during the study process, as well as career and psychological support by specifying the support to be provided to specific student groups (for instance, students from abroad, part-time students, distance-learning students, students with special needs, etc.).**

Students of RARZI are supported both upon their admission and during the entire study process. Upon admission, meetings between students and RARZI administration are held. During these meetings, students are informed about the procedure of studies, work of the Office and the library, as well as other matters of interest to them. During the study process, students are encouraged to address their questions to the teaching staff and the administration. It is implemented every year. All new students participate in these support activities. This kind of support is useful psychologically and practically because it helps first-year students to get to know each other, the lecturers and the administration.

All students of RARZI can receive both spiritual and psycho-emotional support, which helps students to overcome adaptation problems in the beginning of studies, minimise the emotional manifestation of stress, overcome the challenges of forming relationships and deal with crisis situations. Spiritual support to students is offered by RARZI chaplain. Recollections (retreats), which are organised for students and staff 2-3 times during each academic year, serve the same purpose, as they are an opportunity to jointly relax, contemplate and discuss matters of spiritual life, form friendships, and discuss topical matters privately or in groups. Students have expressed both in surveys and verbally their satisfaction with the fellowship activities, retreats and the daily support they receive from the chaplain, especially in the period of examination session and the process of elaboration of thesis.

RARZI students have a special student lounge at their disposal. As the lectures take place in the evenings and students come to lectures after work, the lounge offers a possibility to make tea and heat their meal. The student lounge is also a place for friendship gatherings, which help students meet each other and exchange their thoughts. The Student Lounge was created after RARZI moved from the Old Town. Thus meeting the needs of students who were complaining that there are no place to have a meal in the surrounding area.

Financial hardships faced by students are addressed on individual basis. RARZI administration and the Foundation Board may agree with a student on deferred payment of tuition fee and establish a schedule for debt settlement. If needed, chaplain and the dean of the student's parish are involved in addressing the issue. In such situations the student is allowed to continue the academic activity, namely, attend lectures and have an internship. So far, RARZI has not exmatriculated any student due to unpaid tuition fee.

The cases of financial distress are diverse. In two cases, students received support from foreign private sponsors to cover the tuition fees for the studies in Master programme. The sponsors wanted to support young student priests. RARZI also searches the funding from international foundations to enable the best students to pursue doctoral studies abroad at Pontifical Universities. Thus RARZI is preparing a new generation of lecturers. For example, RARZI alumnus fr. Mikhail Volokhov, who will defend his doctoral thesis in Rome in 2024, has been teaching the RARZI course on Church History and Patrology for three years. This is a regular annual process. There was a slight interruption during the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, every year at least two students ask for an individual tuition fee schedule due to financial difficulties. The pandemic years were particularly difficult, when many people in Latvia lost their jobs. Graduating from RARZI students often thank lecturers and administration for their humanistic and individual approach, especially in times of difficulty.

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

**2.4.1. Description and assessment of the fields of scientific research and/or artistic creation in the study field, their compliance with the aims of the higher education institution/ college and the study field, and the development level of scientific research and artistic creation (provide a separate description of the role of the doctoral study programmes, if applicable).**

Institutional status of RARZI, its fields of activity, as well as values defined in the Strategy (Cooperation and Interdisciplinarity) and its goals (solid offer for studies in religion and theology, which is based on Catholic tradition, is open to broadened ecumenical dialogue and embraces specific social needs, and active participation in shaping public opinion and promoting of well-being) determine that, fundamentally, RARZI is oriented towards cooperation. Fundamental and applied research at RARZI corresponds to the goals of the study field and primary directions of scientific research. Projects, publications and other research activity of academic staff and researchers involved in the study field attests to that. Research conducted by RARZI is characterised by interdisciplinarity, which evolves around the ideal of Christian humanism, which is defined in the mission of RARZI, namely, to realise the ideal of Christian humanism outlined in Revelation, teaching of the Church and Catholic academic tradition, to develop comprehensive view on human being and the society, to contribute to enlivening of ideals of Christian humanism in Latvian society and culture. Thus, the goal of the study field and research is to facilitate a dialogue between the Church and the society in harmony with the overarching goal of the Strategy of RARZI.

Research activity in RARZI contains both fundamental and applied research. Subjects of scientific research are relevant, they correspond to the primary directions of research and they ensure the thematic coverage needed for implementation of the study process. In collaboration with the Riga Institute of Theology, teaching staff of RARZI has established a team that has been able to do a high-quality theological work and to provide commented scientific translations of documents of the magisterium of the Church, which primarily facilitate development in the field of religion and theology, as well as development of scientific terminology. Furthermore, these publications are a significant contribution to the humanities and social sciences in Latvia. Examples include three publications, whose opening became a significant event in the history of culture and which were included in the international [Information Network of Vatican City State](#), namely, • a bilingual Latin-Latvian publication of documents of the Second Vatican Council [Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Declarations, Decrees](#) (Riga, 2016) with comments, and • [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#) (available only in Latvian) (Riga, 2019). The latter became significant in academic circles in Latvia, as it became an inspiration for two international academic events.

In its scientific research activity, RARZI is guided by virtues of dialogue and openness, which are the basis for collaboration with higher education institutions in Latvia having a similar profile. • The closest scientific and academic collaboration has been developed between RARZI and the Riga Institute of Theology (hereinafter referred to as the RIT). Courses in theology at RARZI are delivered by teaching staff of the RIT. Both institutes jointly organise international scientific conferences, seminars, fellowship events, as well as scientific conferences. They publish a joint scientific journal *Terra Mariana*, whose scientific editors are professors from both institutes. • RARZI has been cooperating closely with the Luther Academy already since 2014, when they jointly organised an ecumenical conference *The Word, Prayer, Ministry: Christian Ideals in Modern World*. This cooperation is realised through organisation of joint conferences, seminars and scientific conferences for students, as well as through cooperation between teaching staff of both institutions. In 2022, RARZI, the RTI and the Luther Academy took part in a course organised for teaching staff by Riga Stradiņš University. In 2023, both higher education institutions organised

international ecumenical conference *Ecology of the Spirit*. • For several years, RARZI has been cooperating with the University of Latvia. Primarily they have been organising academic conferences in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Embassy of Latvia to the Holy See. Several members of the teaching staff and visiting lecturers of RARZI have delivered courses in various departments of the University of Latvia. For example, professor Žanete Narkēviča has been a member of the teaching staff at the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Latvia and a researcher at the Sociology and Philosophy Institute of the University of Latvia. Currently, visiting lecturer Andris Priede who teaches the course on History of the Church at RARZI, is lecturing at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Latvia, and visiting lecturer Jānis Priede, who delivers lectures on Holy Scriptures at RARZI, teaches at Asian studies programme of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Latvia. Professor Māra Kiope is also a researcher at the Sociology and Philosophy Institute of the University of Latvia, and she is involved in many scientific projects. • Cooperation between RARZI and the Riga Stradiņš University is developing in the field of psychology and psychotherapy. Associate professor Ingrīda Trups-Kalne is participating in several research projects. Furthermore, a course in didactics for teaching staff of RARZI, the RIT and the Luther Academy was organised in collaboration with the Riga Stradiņš University. • Professor Žanete Narkēviča and Andris Kravalis have also taught courses and supervised research papers at the Latvian Christian Academy. • Recently, RARZI has started to develop cooperation with the Baltic Pastoral Institute, for example, this year, Edgars Mažis was invited to teach a course on Pastoral Counselling for the master's study programme at RARZI.

Openness of RARZI and its dialogue with the society is clearly attested by the following projects: • RARZI, together with the Embassy of Latvia in the Holy See and the University of Latvia, organised an opening of a book and an academic lecture of cardinal Peter Turkson at the University of Latvia. Likewise, in 2022, RARZI organised an international scientific conference *Human Being and the Society: Towards the Common Good* devoted to social teaching of the Church. • [Encyclical \*Laudato Si'\* by Pope Francis](#) (Riga, 2016), which deals with issues of ecology and care for common home, became a basis for the academic lecture delivered by the Vatican's Secretary of State at the University of Latvia and organised by RARZI together with the Embassy of Latvia in the Holy See and the University of Latvia. Furthermore, in 2023, RARZI, the RIT and the Luther Academy organised an international ecumenical conference *Ecology of the Spirit* devoted to the subject of ecology covered in encyclical *Laudato Si'*. • In the development of ecumenical dimension of theology, the scientific conference *Identity and Openness*, which was organised by RARZI, the Embassy of Latvia in the Holy See and the University of Latvia, and the conference proceedings published afterwards should be mentioned. This conference was organised on the sidelines of the visit to Latvia in 2014 by cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

In general, directions of scientific and applied research of RARZI comply with the goals of the study field Religion and Theology, as well as the highlights in the field theology.

#### **2.4.2. The relation between scientific research and/or artistic creation and the study process, including the description and assessment of the use of the outcomes in the study process.**

Study process in study programmes offered by RARZI is closely linked to scientific research because teaching staff involved in study process is active in research and it transfers research experience, findings and developed approaches to study courses, thus offering to students the most recent

knowledge and skills.

The study filed of RARZI is based in tradition of Christian philosophy and theological anthropology. Interdisciplinary approach to scientific research and creative link with dynamics of the study process allows providing an in-depth and comprehensive explanation of the nature of a human being and development of social processes, as well as shaping the understanding of fundamental values. Studies in diverse fields of humanities (theology, philosophy, ethics, pedagogy, social studies, culture and history of religion) at RARZI are based on such an anthropological approach. The goal of these studies is to facilitate the dialogue between the Church and culture by promoting the balance of ethical and cultural values in society.

Scientific research in RARZI particularly highlights the link between the research findings and study process. In collaboration with the RIT, teaching staff of RARZI has formed a team, which is able to do a high-quality theological work and offer commented scientific translations of the documents of the magisterium of the Church, which primarily facilitate development in the field of religion and theology, as well as development of scientific terminology, and are a significant contribution to the field of humanities and social sciences in Latvia. These publications are mainly published by the Book Office of RARZI and publishing house Vox Ecclesiae, which attract international funding to projects and ensure project management. Since 2012, several significant publications of translations with comments have been published.

Books published by the Book Office of RARZI:

Dominique Barthelemy, *God and His Image*, 2012

Bernard Sesboüé, *Mary in the Light of Faith*, 2012

Joseph-Marie Verlinde, *100 Questions about New Religious Movements*, 2013

Margaret Peters, *Global Ethics*, 2014

Collection of texts *Identity and Openness*, opened during the international conference held on the sidelines of the visit to Latvia by cardinal Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 2014

Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory of Catechesis*, 2015

Cardinal Jean Daniélou, *Culture Betrayed by Its Own*, 2018

Hrostovsky, *Pentateuch*, 2017

Pope Francis, apostolic constitution *Veritatis gaudium*, 2021

Collection of Church documents on prevention of minors and the vulnerable, *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*, 2021

Study book for catechists on Confirmation, *The Witness*, 2023

Books published by Vox Ecclesiae:

Pope Benedict XVI, *Apostles and Witnesses of the Church*, 2012

Pope Benedict XVI, *Ministry of Priests*, 2012

Pope Paul VI, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 2012

Pope John Paul II, encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, 2012



Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 2014

Pope Benedict XVI, *Saint Paul the Apostle*, 2015

Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth II*, 2016

Pope Francis, encyclical *Laudato Si'*, 2016

Pope Benedict XVI, *Catechesis on Prayer*, 2016

Vatican Council II, *Constitutions, Declarations, Decrees*, 2016

Pope Benedict XVI, *Catechesis on Prayer*, 2016

First publishing in Latvian of *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Declarations, Decrees*, 2016

*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2019

*Apostolic Visit of Pope Francis to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia: Address, Homilies and Interviews*, 2019

Pope Benedict XVI, *Childhood of Jesus*, 2020

Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 2021

Pope Francis, encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, in progress

Pope Benedict XVI, encyclical *Spe Salvi*, 2023

RARZI, together with the RIT, regularly publishes a collection of research articles *Terra Mariana*, which contains proceedings of conferences and research articles.

These publications are essential for studies of theological courses in bachelor's and master's study programmes, as well as in writing of research papers. For example, an interdisciplinary project implemented by RARZI on protection of the minors and the vulnerable is significant in the area of canon law and jurisprudence, spiritual theology, anthropology and psychology. Experts from RARZI developed a study course in the field of prevention in collaboration with the RIT and Gottfried Ugolini, international expert in trauma psychology and crisis intervention, lecturer at the Child Protection Institute of the Pontifical Gregorian University, as well as in consultations with experts from crisis centre *Dardedze*. This course is included in the master's study programme, and it is widely used in the Catholic Church in Latvia.

During the majority of study courses, teaching staff of RARZI introduces students to research articles in the field of the study course. Even the bachelor's study programme contains study courses, which introduce students to the selection and analysis of specialised literature, methodology used in research, as well as processing, understanding and presentation of research findings. When choosing the topics for research papers, students of the bachelor's study programme are advised to develop their research around a specific work or a document of the magisterium. Students gladly choose something that is translated and commented in Latvian, and is published by the Book Office of RARZI or publishing house *Vox Ecclesiae*. Prior to writing their bachelor's theses, students are writing term papers, which are analysed and evaluated and help in writing of bachelor's and master's theses afterwards.

The following research papers were focused on a specific document of the Church:

- Raimonds Garais, Pastoral Ministry of Layman in the Parish from the Perspective of Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* by Pope Francis
- Ilze Čečiš (née Elija), Pope Francis' Teaching on Fraternity as the Epiphenomenon of the Virtue of Love in the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*

- Dace Bisenciece, Understanding Hope in the Context of Modern Challenges in Encyclical *Spe Salvi* by Benedict XVI
- Katkovska Inese, Understanding Hope in the Context of Meaning of Life in Encyclical *Spe Salvi* by Benedict XVI
- Solveiga Gulau, Mystery of Human Existence before Death in the Context of Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*

Independent assignments of students include activities, which develop the competence of scientific research, such as writing of essays, compiling of presentations for study seminars, writing and presenting of term papers. Seminar on methodology helps students in this process, as this seminar teaches to write a research paper in compliance with the [Regulations on Research Papers](#) (available only in Latvian).

Participation of students in scientific seminars and conferences is also a part of study process. Every year, in spring, scientific conference of students of RARZI and the RIT is organised; the conference is divided in sections on Philosophy, Theology and Social Sciences. During the Covid-19 pandemic, scientific conference of students was successfully held online. At the plenary sessions of the conference, scientific papers are presented by special guests from abroad and teaching staff of RARZI and the RIT, which hold a doctorate degree. For example, among the special guests at the plenary session of the scientific conference of students in 2018 were priest Andris Marija Jerumanis (RARZI/Lugano University), professor Benass Ulevičus (Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas), Braiens Lapsa (Oxford University) and Ieva Rozenbaha (Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music). In 2023, scientific conference of students took place concurrently with the international ecumenical conference *Ecology of the Spirit*. Scientific conferences of students are increasingly popular among both students and teaching staff. They are essential for writing bachelor's and master's theses. Students from both study programmes write their research papers in close collaboration with supervising tutors and, in case of master's thesis, special research consultants. Sometimes students of RARZI are involved in research projects. In general, scientific and applied research at RARZI and research findings correlate with study process on both bachelor's and master's level.

#### **2.4.3. Description and assessment of the international cooperation in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation by specifying any joint projects, researches, etc. Specify those study programmes, which benefit from this cooperation. Specify the future plans for the development of international cooperation in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation.**

- RARZI has established scientific cooperation with Catholic universities in Rome, in particular with the Pontifical Lateran University, the Pontifical Gregorian University, the Pontifical Atheneum of St. Anselm, the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Teaching staff of RARZI take part in conferences organised by the Pontifical Lateran University, such as XII International Symposium of University Professors *Culture of the New Humanism* (Rome, 2015), XIII International Symposium of University Professors (2016), international conference *Passione per Dio: Spirituality and Theology of the Reforms after 500* (Rome, Italy, 18 – 19 October 2017). Cooperation with the pontifical universities is essential for formation and scientific development of the new generation of teaching staff of RARZI. For example, currently two members of teaching staff of RARZI have their doctorate studies in Rome – priest Mihails Volohovs, who teaches the course on History of the Church, is studying at the Pontifical Gregorian University (*Gregoriana*), priest Kārlis Miķeslons, who teaches a course on

Liturgy, studies at the Pontifical Atheneum of St. Anselm (*Anselmianum*). In 2015, bishop and Rector of the Pontifical Lateran University Enriko dal Kovolo visited RARZI. That was a historic event for Catholic higher education institutions in Latvia because it was the first visit of the Rector of the Pontifical Lateran University to Latvia. Furthermore, representatives of the Faculty of Theology of the PLU are appointed as chairs of the research paper defence commissions. For example, the Vice-chancellor and professor of Theology of the PLU Lubomir Žak attended the defence of master's thesis. Another milestone in development of and cooperation between RARZI and the RIT was a meeting between the Director of RARZI Ž.Narkēviča, the Director of the RIT and priest M.Lācis, professor and Rector of the PLU Vincenzo Buonomo and professor and Dean of the Faculty of Theology Riccardo Ferri.

- Cooperation on the level of doctorate studies takes place with the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Poland), where member of RARZI teaching staff Andris Ševels was awarded with the doctorate degree after defending his doctorate thesis on Personalised Perspective on Mariology of John Paul II (Lublin, 2019). The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin was also graduated by archbishop and the Moderator of RARZI Zbignevs Stankevičs. Lecturer of RARZI, who taught the course on Holy Scriptures, Terēze Druka (+) also defended her doctorate thesis on Jesus and Satan in the Gospel of Marc at this University.
- RARZI has developed cooperation with the Franciscan University of Steubenville (USA) in the field of catechesis. Within the framework of this project, students from RARZI had an opportunity to take part in a study course on Methodology of Catechists. • RARZI has also developed a strong cooperation with the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. Teaching staff of RARZI regularly attend international conferences organised by this University, for example, interdisciplinary scientific conference *Turning Point in the Paradigm of a Travel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (Silova, Lithuania, 2021), international research conference *Woman's Call and Dignity* (Kaunas, 2020) international scientific conference devoted to social issues (Kaunas, Lithuania, 2019). Regular cooperation with the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas also takes place in the framework of Erasmus+ programme, which has resulted in guest lectures held at RARZI.
- The cooperation between RARZI and the Ukrainian Catholic University is also significant. Within the framework of this cooperation, two guest lectures have been held as part of Erasmus+ mobility programme. Professors of Ukrainian Catholic University have taken part in two international conferences organised by RARZI, namely, *Human Being and the Society: Towards the Common Good* (Riga, 2022) and international ecumenical conference *Ecology of the Spirit*.
- Since 2012, RARZI has been taking part in academic cooperation programme within the framework of Erasmus and was granted with Erasmus+ Charter for the next period. Exchange visits of academic personnel and experience exchange visits of the staff have taken place on the grounds of the cooperation agreements concluded with the Faculty of Theology of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University in Ruzomberok and the Faculty of Theology of the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. Recently, cooperation agreements were concluded with the Catholic Institute of Toulouse and the Catholic University Saint Teresa of Avila. Students of the master's study programme of RARZI are actively taking part in internship mobility and have their internships in diverse Catholic organisations and institutions in Malta, Italy, Slovakia and Poland; they also take part in student mobility and study at University in Ruzomberok and University in Warsaw.

Both study programmes benefit from international cooperation because international cooperation increases the research qualification of teaching staff and their awareness of global trends in the field. That, on turn, ensures that topical subjects are covered and studied during the study process

and in graduation theses.

RARZI has faced various difficulties in its cooperation and projects. • First, cooperation with the Lateran Pontifical University and other Pontifical Universities in Rome requires a good command of Italian. Their international conferences are of course open to at least four working languages, but most of the study programmes are offered in Italian. Therefore, studies in Rome to require taking intensive course of Italian. • Participation in the international projects and research activities is limited by financial constraints. There were situations where foundations in Latvia or Europe did not support projects related to religion and theology. • RARZI students have difficulties to participate in Erasmus+ study mobility because they have to leave their family or work for a longer period of time. • In cooperation with the Catholic University of Ukraine, in the last year's projects it was difficult to find speakers and participants in the conference due to the war, because there are strong restrictions to leave the country, especially for men.

Future plans for scientific research cooperation include the following initiatives and events: the Strategy of RARZI envisages the merger of RARZI and the RIT, which will strengthen the Catholic education in Latvia; RARZI will promote opportunities for its teaching staff to take part in scientific conferences organised by Catholic universities, particularly the PLU, to use their libraries and archives, as well as to submit scientific publications in their collections of articles and journals. A great and untapped potential lies in ecumenical cooperation among different Christian higher education institutions and joint organising of international seminars. In 2024, an international conference is expected to be organised in cooperation with the Luther Academy. In 2023, several members of teaching staff of RARZI and the RIT will take part in international conference *Christianity and Creativeness*, which is organised by the Faculty of Theology of the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. RARZI will strengthen cooperation with the Ukrainian Catholic University and will implement joint projects. In 2023 and 2024, it is planned to publish *Terra Mariana*, a research journal of RARZI and the RIT, which will contain the most valuable conference reports. Furthermore, publication of encyclical *Lumen Fidei* by Pope Francis and encyclical *Spe Salvi* by Pope Benedict XVI is expected in 2023. These publications will be opened on the sidelines of an international conference.

#### **2.4.4. Specify the way how the higher education institution/ college promotes the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and/or artistic creation. Provide the description and assessment of the activities carried out by the academic staff in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation relevant to the study field by providing examples.**

RARZI ensures and facilitates the involvement of teaching staff in scientific research with the following: facilitation of growth in academic career, support to scientific research, including publication of research papers and participation in scientific conferences, as well as professional development and experience exchange of personnel, ensuring the replenishment and continuity of academic personnel. In future, it would be essential to attract more financial resources for this area. Currently, resources are limited and are mainly received from foreign foundations. During the previous period of accreditation, RARZI implemented projects in various areas.

- In the area of history of the Church and international relations, the original research *100 Years in the Spirit of Truth and Trust: Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Latvia and the Holy See* should be highlighted. It was conducted by a member of the teaching staff

of RARZI, priest Mihails Volohovs and researcher at the Sociology and Philosophy Institute Inese Runce in the archives of the Vatican City, and it was devoted to the history of diplomatic relations between Latvia and the Holy See. In June 2021, RARZI, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Embassy of Latvia in the Holy See, organised a conference devoted to a centenary of these relations.

- Another significant contribution to the fundamental theology is a publication of scientific monograph of the Moderator of RARZI, archbishop Zbignevas Stankevičius *Quo Vadis World of Europe: Surprising Analysis by B. Veltein* 2022 and research conference organised by RARZI at the National Library of Latvia and attended by representatives of the Latvian Academy of Sciences.
- The interdisciplinary project implemented by RARZI on protection of the minors and the vulnerable is significant in the area of canon law and jurisprudence, spiritual theology, anthropology and psychology. Experts from RARZI developed a study course in the field of prevention in collaboration with the RIT and Gottfried Ugolini, international expert in trauma psychology and crisis intervention, lecturer at the Child Protection Institute of the Pontifical Gregorian University, as well as in consultations with experts from crisis centre *Dardedze*. This course is included in the master's study programme, and it is widely used in the Catholic Church in Latvia. In 2021, within the framework of this interdisciplinary project, an international conference *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven* was held and a publication of conference proceedings with translations of Church documents devoted to protection of the minors and the vulnerable was published.
- *Letters* by St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus translated and supplemented with comments by professor Baiba Brūdere and her scientific research for the Symposium of Vatican on fundamental theology of priesthood *Pour une théologie fondamentale du sacerdoce. Vol. 2: Perspectives complémentaires* (Paris, éd. du Cerf, 2022), which is translated and published in six languages, are a significant contribution in the area of spiritual theology. Likewise, a significant research contribution in the area of spiritual theology is the study on spirituality of Jesuits, which is reflected in two scientific monographs *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises* (2018) and *Remarks of a Pilgrim: Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola* (2021) by Jānis Priede, professor at the University of Latvia and member of academic staff of RARZI teaching a course on Holy Scriptures, with translation supplemented with comments. Professor Žanete Narkēviča was a scientific editor for both publications.
- In the field of studies on Holy Scriptures, RARZI and publishing house Vox Ecclesiae published Latvian translations of trilogy *Jesus from Nazareth* by an outstanding theologian Joseph Alois Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, which was edited by professor Pauls Kļaviņš. Furthermore, Catechesis on Prayer by Benedict XVI was also published. These publications are essential not only as sources of reference used by students of religion and theology, but they are also a significant contribution to enrichment of Latvian spiritual heritage. Equally significant is the cooperation with professor Hrostovsky, expert on Holy Scriptures at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, who delivered guest lectures at RARZI. RARZI published his research in Holy Scripture exegesis *Pentateuch* in Latvian. On 8 January 2015, Terēze Druka (+), lecturer of RARZI, who taught a course on Holy Scriptures, defended her doctorate thesis in theology on Jesus and Satan in the Gospel of Marc at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Poland). This exegetic theological research was published as scientific monograph.
- Significant contribution in the area of philosophy and ethics is the fundamental research conducted by professor Māra Kiope on philosophical heritage of Latvian philosopher Ladusāns. This research was published in a scientific monograph *Presence. Life and Work of Latvian-Brazilian Philosopher and Jesuit Staņislavs Ladusāns* (2015). In the area of philosophy a scientific monograph by prof. Žanete Narkēviča *Imagination and Creativity of Language* focussed on hermeneutics of French philosopher is significant.

- In the area of history of culture and the arts, a significant historic and cultural event was the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary since Pope Innocent III officially announced that Livonia is a land devoted to the Holy Virgin Mary (*Terra Mariana*) at the Fourth Council of the Lateran. In order to celebrate this historic event for Latvia, affiliates of the Pontifical Lateran Institute, namely, the Riga Institute of Theology and the Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences (RARZI), organised international scientific conference *Terra Mariana 800: Dialogue between Faith and the Society* (2015). In the light of these celebrations, professor Žanete Narkēviča led an interdisciplinary project *All Generations will Bless Me: the Image of Our Lady in Latvia*, which involved experts on culture and the arts from the Latvian Academy of Sciences. Between 2015 and 2018, RARZI implemented an international project Summer Academy for Liturgical Music *Psallite sapienter – Sing the Mystery*, which was led by expert in liturgical music, professor F. K. Prassl, *Dr. theol.* (professor at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome and the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz). Participants of the event had an opportunity to learn the repertoire of liturgical music in a liturgical choir and to take masterclasses in Gregorian chant, as well as to learn new knowledge and skills that match their interests and level during classes with vocal teachers or masterclasses in organ playing. Professor Skaidrīte Kalvāne has provided a significant contribution to studies of cultural heritage in Latgale region by taking part in international conferences and seminars, and publishing research papers.
- In the area of psychology, teaching staff of RARZI, and associate professor Ingrīda Trups-Kalne in particular, implemented joint projects with the Riga Stradiņš University and psychologists and psychotherapists practicing in Latvia. Several interdisciplinary panel discussions were held within the framework of project *Dialogue between Psychology and Theology*. Furthermore, I. Trups-Kalne has taken part in international congresses and conferences (“The Effect of Classical Massage on the Emotional State of Adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes”, *2nd European Paediatric Physiotherapy Congress* (2022, Florence); “Intelligence Structure Test adaptation in Latvian sample: descriptive statistics and demographic correlates”, *104. RSU Research Week* (Riga); “Intelligence Structure Test Adaptation: Findings of the Pilot Study”, *6<sup>th</sup> international scientific and practical conference on Health and Personal Development: Interdisciplinary Approach* (RSU, Riga, 2020)). I. Trups-Kalne is also an author of a scientific monograph and socio-psychological study on Morality, Political Ideology and Religiousness (Riga, 2014).
- In the area of education and pedagogy, RARZI closely cooperates with the Catholic Gymnasium of Riga, and, in 2016, they jointly organised an ecumenical conference on Christian Education in Latvia.

**2.4.5. Specify how the involvement of the students in scientific research and/ or applied research and/or artistic creation activities is promoted. Provide the assessment and description of the involvement of the students of all-level study programmes in the relevant study field in scientific research and/ or applied research and/or artistic creation activities by giving examples of the opportunities offered to and used by the students.**

RARZI ensures and facilitates the involvement of students in scientific research mainly through seminars, report writing and presentation during study courses, writing for term papers, bachelor's thesis and master's thesis, participation in scientific conferences of students, and participation in projects implemented by RARZI. For example, students are involved in preparation of international academic lectures, organising of book or journal openings and related conferences, preparation of

courses for catechists and compilation of research journal of RARZI and the RIT *Terra Mariana*, and they also take part in events of the Summer Music Academy. Master's thesis consists of both theoretical and applied research part; therefore, students of the master's study programme have an opportunity to conduct research at places of their internship. Furthermore, RARZI offers internship mobility opportunities within the framework of Erasmus+ programme. It means that students can creatively choose places for mobility internship in pastoral and support centres, museums, archives, youth centres, etc. in Europe. Students of RARZI have already had such internships, and these internships have creatively facilitated the writing of research papers. Sometimes RARZI invites teaching staff from abroad to provide supervision of research papers. During the process of writing, students have access to resources offered by libraries of RARZI and the RIT, EBSCO database, and a comfortable library, which meets the modern needs. Together with their research works, students submit a signed confirmation attesting that the work was done independently and does not contain elements of plagiarism. Bachelor's and master's theses are available at the library of RARZI and electronically.

### **SELECTIVE OVERVIEW OF SUBJECTS COVERED IN BACHELOR'S THESES**

- Pastoral Ministry of Layman in the Parish from the Perspective of Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* by Pope Francis
- *Memento Mori*: Existential Meaning of Contemplation of Eternity and Death on the Path of True Humanity and Search for God
- The Word of God and the Eucharist in the Ministry of Permanent Deacon, Based on Dogmatic Constitution of the Second Vatican Council *Lumen Gentium*
- Pope Francis' Teaching on Fraternity as the Epiphenomenon of the Virtue of Love in the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*
- Understanding Hope in the Context of Modern Challenges in Encyclical *Spe Salvi* by Benedict XVI
- Call to Holiness: Decision-making in Ignatian Spirituality
- Missionary Calling of Young People as Laity in the Teachings of Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis
- Theoretical Problem of Evil
- Theological Aspects in Maria Montessori's Education
- Spiritual Companionship as Pastoral Ministry in Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis
- Mystery of Human Existence Before Death in the Context of Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*
- Beauty in Liturgical Celebration According to Section 35 of Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* by Pope Benedict XVI
- Love as Path Taken by Individual towards Knowing One's Self and God in encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* by Pope Benedict XVI
- Legal Aspects of the Seal of Confession
- Longing of the Human Soul for God as a Source of Music
- Natural Family Planning in Christian Anthropology: Understanding Personal Dignity and Love
- Reflection on the Mystery of the Eucharist in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II

### **SUBJECTS COVERED IN MASTER'S THESES**

- Spiritual Companionship after Dissolution of Marriage and Divorce Based on Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis
- Role of Cardinal Virtues in Re-socialisation of Prisoners

- Recommendations for Pastoral Work in the Context of the State of Emergency caused by the Pandemic: Experience of Job
- Understanding of Human Sexuality in Theology of the Body by John Paul II and Its Integration in Pastoral Work with Adolescents
- Capacity of Self-Transcendence of Women and Its Role in Pastoral Counselling
- Solutions to Fertility Issues in Latvia: Challenges of Moral Aspects in Pastoral Counselling
- Experience of Loneliness by a Human in the Context of Filial Mercy and as an Existential-Psychological Phenomenon: Possibilities to Use Pastoral Care
- Issue of Euthanasia in the Face of the Mystery of Life and Death
- Opportunities for Pastoral Ministry in Children's Palliative Care in Latvia
- Medium as a Pastoral Counsellor for a Person in Crisis
- Youth Evangelisation and Religious Conversion in Pastoral Companionship
- Anthropological Aspects of Maternal Mercy in the Identity of a Women in the Context of Wound Caused by Abortion
- Human Happiness in the Debate with the New Global Ethics: Possibilities for Pastoral Care
- Neighbourly Love as an Expression of God's Love in Pastoral Work with Prisoners Sentenced to Life Imprisonment
- Ignatian Spirituality in the Spiritual Growth of the Christian and Practical Aspects in Practicing
- Professional Work of a Chaplain in the Interaction between Palliative Care Patient, Doctor and Relatives
- Opportunities for Development of Pastoral Counselling Profession in Latvia: Background, Experience and Perspectives

When assessing the effectiveness of the solutions applied, it should be noted that the organisation of a scientific conference significantly motivates students from all courses of study to become practically acquainted with the example of research at the university and the required level of its quality. In recent years, the conference has been increasingly attended by students and young lecturers from other RARZI and RTI courses. Students are also encouraged to think about the potential topic of their final thesis from the outset, thus investing all their study time in exploring their topic in depth and acquiring information.

**2.4.6. Provide a brief description and assessment of the forms of innovation (for instance, product, process, marketing, and organisational innovation) generally used in the higher education institution, especially in study field subject to the assessment, by giving the respective examples and assessing their impact on the study process.**

During the reporting period, innovations applied by RARZI were mainly related to creative approach to study process and new opportunities offered to students as tools for modernising the study environment and updating spiritual resources:

- Besides studies, students had an opportunity to take part in the Summer Academy for Liturgical Music.
- Every year, on 15 August, during the celebrations in Aglona, RARZI and teaching staff of the RIT set up a tent and take part in catechesis of RARZI.
- For many years, the Centre of Catechesis of RARZI has been organising a course *Spiritual Impulse*, which is intended for catechists and is attended by both students and graduates of RARZI.
- Teaching staff and students of RARZI have developed a successful creative cooperation with



Radio Mary, where teaching staff and students take part in radio shows and interviews or create their own shows.

- In developing cooperation with the Latvian Prison Administration, teaching staff of RARZI organised a seminar on anthropology and ethics for top-level employees of the Prison Administration.
- A successful creative attempt to establish ties with health-care institutions resulted in a seminar on the subject of life and death organised by teaching staff of RARZI for the medical personnel of the Riga East University Hospital.
- New solutions had to be sought also due to Covid-19 pandemic, which demanded learning about technological possibilities to ensure studies online. One of the master's thesis at RARZI was devoted to prevention of psychological consequences of the pandemic. Every year, students and teaching staff hold recollections, where, in the spirit of fellowship and prayers, students can replenish their spiritual and psychological strength and receive spiritual guidance from the chaplain of RARZI. Furthermore, each year fellowship events during the Advent Season are organised together with the Riga Institute of Theology.

## **2.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

**2.5.1. Provide the assessment as to how the cooperation with different institutions from Latvia (higher education institutions/ colleges, employers, employers' organisations, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, scientific institutes, etc.) within the study field contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field. Specify the criteria by which the cooperation partners for the study field and the relevant study programmes are selected and how the cooperation is organised by describing the cooperation with employers. In addition, specify the mechanism for the attraction of the cooperation partners.**

Cooperation between the study field Religion and Theology and institutions in Latvia has different formats, including formal cooperation realised on the grounds of concluded agreements and cooperation during various activities. Cooperation partners are chosen on grounds of several criteria:

1. common interest in humanistic and ethical ideals of European culture;
2. desire to strengthen the spiritual and ethical foundations of Latvian society;
3. common research interests;
4. employment and career opportunities for graduates of study programmes. Clearly, long-term cooperation is also based on former positive experience.

Cooperation with institutions in Latvia mainly takes place in three strategic areas: implementation of study process, provision of research process and contribution to the society.

Cooperation partners of the study field Religion and Theology are selected according to the specifics and needs of the study field, its study programmes and research; when selecting cooperation partners attention is paid to partner's activity and reputation. The director of study programme and teaching staff participate in industry events (conferences, discussions), organise seminars, guest lectures, conferences and other networking events. This cooperation is aimed at achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study field and study programmes.

Cooperation with employers is ongoing and it takes place at several levels. The Archbishop of Riga is the Moderator (Head) of RARZI. He represents RARZI at the Bishops' Conference of Latvia, which is the founder of RARZI that sets tasks for RARZI and supervises their fulfilment. The Moderator also publicly represents RARZI in the society. Representatives and/or authorised entities of employers participate in admission interviews and in the sessions of bachelor's or master's thesis defence commission.

RARZI has signed cooperation agreements with all dioceses of the Catholic Church in Latvia (Riga, Liepaja, Jelgava, Rezekne-Aglona). These agreements envisage academic cooperation and provision of internships and jobs for RARZI students and graduates. Cooperation agreements have also been signed with the foundation *Caritas Latvia* (<https://www.caritas.org/where-caritas-work/europe/latvia/>) and other charitable and social aid organisations, such as the *Bethlehem House of Mercy* (<https://katolis.lv/organizacija/betlemes-zelsirdibas-maja/> (available only in Latvian)). Cooperation agreement for internship opportunities is signed with the Riga East University Hospital, and potential agreements are negotiated with the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Service and the Prison Administration of the Ministry of the Interior on the opportunities to learn about the work of a chaplain in these institutions.

In support of the idea of Christian unity, RARZI has signed a cooperation agreement with the Luther Academy (<https://lutraakademija.lv/> (available only in Latvian)). This agreement envisages academic cooperation, meetings and further training of teaching staff, joint conferences and joint activities for the benefit of the society.

This cooperation ensures that the content of RARZI studies is in line with the requirements set by the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University and teaching of the Catholic Church, and it gives students the opportunity to gain a comprehensive insight into and undergo internship in various institutions, which fulfil a significant social function, by guaranteeing them security and providing social services. Ecumenical cooperation, including cooperation with the Luther Academy, enables students from different Christian denominations to study at RARZI and to get education they prefer.

**2.5.2. Provide the assessment as to how the cooperation with different institutions from abroad (higher education institutions/ colleges, employers, employers' organisations, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, scientific institutes, etc.) within the study field contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field. Specify the criteria by which the cooperation partners suitable for the study field and the relevant study programmes are selected and how the cooperation is organised by describing the cooperation with employers. In addition, specify the mechanism for the attraction of the cooperation partners.**

Cooperation between RARZI and various foreign institutions gives an opportunity to integrate the experience of other countries into study programmes and activity of RARZI, and thus it contributes to and ensures the achievement of the goals and study outcomes of the study field.

RARZI is an affiliate of the Pontifical Lateran University in Latvia; therefore, it has the closest cooperation with this University and similar affiliates in other countries. The Faculty of Theology of the PLU (hereafter referred to as the Faculty), together with the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See, supervises and controls the academic quality of studies and their conformity to the teaching of the Church. Representatives of the PLU participate in the defence of bachelor's and

master's theses, and the RARZI management works in close contact with the Faculty.

The main criteria for selecting cooperation partners are a common field of study and its link to the teaching of the Catholic Church. This narrows down the choices considerably. The willingness and interest of partners to cooperate is also important, because RARZI is a very small institution in comparison to European universities. Cooperation is organised by consulting information about each relevant university available on the Internet, by contacting the foreign affairs department or similar organisational unit of the university. Sometimes potential cooperation is initiated by foreign universities or members of teaching staff, who have their doctorate studies at universities abroad. In any case, the efficiency of cooperation is discussed within the group of professors and decision is taken by the Council of RARZI. Cooperation with foreign partners is organised in various formats: besides the mobility opportunities available within and outside the Erasmus programme, online meetings, seminars and conferences take place, specific study courses are coordinated, as well as internship opportunities and institutions, groups, parishes, which can offer internships, are discussed.

**2.5.3. Specify the system or mechanisms, which are used to attract the students and the teaching staff from abroad. Provide the assessment of the incoming and outgoing mobility of the teaching staff in the reporting period, the mobility dynamics, and the issues which the higher education institution/ college faces with regard to the mobility of the teaching staff.**

Foreign members of teaching staff are attracted on the grounds of principles determined by the Faculty, namely, they must comply with the Faculty's requirements set for education and they must receive "*nulla osta*" consent. Consequently, only teaching staff from Catholic universities may be invited for the main study courses in Catholic theology. Teaching staff is attracted on the grounds of cooperation agreements signed with foreign universities, as well as through participation in their conferences, through invitations to take part in conferences and through mobility opportunities for teaching staff at RARZI. These processes involve a group of professors, with final decisions taken by the Council of RARZI.

Experience shows that in some cases, an issue of language proficiency both on part of the RARZI students and the visiting teaching staff arises after teaching staff from abroad is invited. Members of the teaching staff cannot fully cover the course content in a language other than their mother tongue (e.g. teaching staff from Poland). Likewise, students, who know the foreign language (e.g. English) well enough, still cannot fully follow the theological insights in this language. To address this situation, in some cases RARZI has provided translation for guest lectures. Meanwhile, foreign language course focuses on theology-related terminology and work with relevant texts.

Attracting foreign students is challenging at this stage, when only part-time onsite studies are available. The situation might improve after the merger of RARZI and the RIT, when onsite studies in Catholic theology will be available.

RARZI has been a part of the Erasmus+ programme since 2014 and has been awarded the Erasmus University Charter, which was renewed in 2021

(<https://www.rarzi.lv/starptautisk%C4%81-sadarb%C4%ABba/erasmus>). RARZI is the only institute affiliated to the PLU that participates in this programme. Within the framework of this programme,

cooperation agreements have been concluded with similar higher education institutions: the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (Poland), the Catholic University of Lublin (Poland), the Catholic University in Ružemberok (Slovakia), Catholic University of Ávila (Spain), Catholic Institute of Toulouse (France) and Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas (Lithuania). At the time of submission of this report, negotiations are held on concluding an agreement with the Ukrainian Catholic University, which is not yet a full-fledged member of the Erasmus programme.

In the period between 2014 and 2022, each year, two members of RARZI teaching and/or administrative staff have been going on teaching or experience exchange visits within the framework of this programme. Initially, RARZI students also took advantage of mobility opportunities and went on a mobility programme to the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw and the Catholic University in Ružemberok, as the study programmes offered by these Universities are closest in terms of content. After the Erasmus programme was expanded to include internship exchanges, several students have taken advantage of this opportunity as well. Every year, RARZI also hosts visiting lecturers from partner universities. There has been one visiting student during the period. It is hard to organise student mobility mainly because RARZI offers part-time onsite study programmes: students, who have permanent work and have family commitments, cannot take part in study or internship mobility programmes and go to another country for several months. This is also the reason why RARZI is not attractive to incoming students, as it cannot provide an opportunity to fully integrate into the student-peer community.

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

**2.6.1. Assessment of the fulfilment of the plan regarding the implementation of the recommendations provided by the experts during the previous accreditation of the study field, as well as the assessment of the impact of the given recommendations on the study quality or the improvement of the study process within the study field and the relevant study programmes.**

During the previous assessment (in 2011) two recommendations were given for the study field.

1. *High qualification and experience of academic personnel, as well as the wonderful library allows considering an opportunity of establishing a doctorate studies programme at the Institute. It can be done in multiple ways, for example, by establishing a joint programme.*

When reviewing recommendations and working on their implementation plan, possibilities to implement them were considered. It was identified that activity of RARZI is determined by the Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church, the Instruction for Congregation of Catholic Education "Reform of the Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences" (28 June 2008), the Apostolic Constitution "*Veritatis Gaudium* on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties", as well as other rules and regulations adopted by the Holy See. These documents set forth that doctorate studies can be implemented by universities or independent affiliates, and not by institutes. Thus, it is impossible to establish a doctorate study programme without changing the status of RARZI. Likewise, due to the decreasing number of students and high prime costs of doctorate study programme, this possibility was not considered any further.

2. *It would be wise to have only one study programme on each study level. In this situation it*

*would mean considering a possibility of merging the two existing master's study programmes by devising separate study modules.*

According to the recommendations and their implementation plan, while implementing the second recommendation, the admission of students in the master's study programme in religion providing qualification of a teacher of philosophy, ethics and religious education (46141) was discontinued in the academic year 2018/2019 as a result of the decrease in the number of applicants due to the reform of the secondary education content. Religious education was removed from the content of secondary education, and potential applicants were not sure about employment opportunities after completion of their studies and receiving this qualification. Thus, RARZI currently offers one study programme at bachelor's level and one study programme at master's level. Hence, the recommendation can be considered as implemented, because in the previous assessment only one recommendation was made for the second level professional study programme awarding qualification of teacher of ethics and religious education (46141):

*"Second level professional study programme should be reformed into the master's study programme and should be incorporated as a study module in one of the existing master's study programmes"*

Due to changes in labour market, the programme was closed in 2013, thus this recommendation is implemented.

Implementation of recommendations has allowed adjusting the study field to the interests of employers by also taking into account the number of applicants and making the study process more compact and modern. As a result, the study field offers one study programme on bachelor's level and one study programme on master's level.

**2.6.2. Implementation of the recommendations given by the experts during the evaluation of the changes to the study programmes in the respective study field or licensed study programmes over the reporting period or recommendations received during the procedure for the inclusion of the study programme on the accreditation form of the study field (if applicable).**

***(Not applicable)***

# Annexes

I - Information on the Higher Education Institution/ College		
Information on the implementation of the study field in the branches of the higher education institution/ college (if applicable)		
List of the governing regulatory enactments and regulations of the higher education institution/ college	P1_Most Important Internal Regulations Documents of Policy and Strategy-papildinats.docx	P1_Nozīmīgākie RARZI iekšējie normatīvie akti.docx
The management structure of the higher education institution/ college	Organisational Chart_ENG (2).docx	Pārvaldības shēma papildināta_LV.docx
II - Description of the Study Field - 2.1. Management of the Study Field		
Plan for the development of the study field (if applicable)	P3_Development Plan for the Study field2.docx	P3_Studiju Virziena Attīstības plāns2.docx
The management structure of the study field	P4_Schematic structure of RARZI management of the study field.jpeg	P4_RARZI Studiju virziena pārvaldības struktūra.jpeg
A document certifying that the higher education institution or college will provide students with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution/ college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.	P5_About the continuity of the study process.zip	P5_apliecinājums par izglītības turpinašanu.zip
A document certifying that the higher education institution or college guarantees compensation for losses to students if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme license is revoked due to actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.	P6_RARZIConfirmation of Compensation.doc	P6_RARZI Kompensācijas Apliecinājums.edoc
Standard sample of study agreement	P7_Contract on studies2.docx	P7_Studiju līgums.docx
II - Description of the Study Field - 2.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System		
Analysis of the results of surveys of students, graduates and employers	P8_RARZI_Analysis of survey results.docx	P8_RARZI aptauju rezultātu analīze.docx
II - Description of the Study Field - 2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field		
Basic information on the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study field	P9_Basic information on the teaching staff 2022-2023_en.xlsx	P9_Pamatinformācija par docetājiem 2022-2023.xlsx
Biographies of the teaching staff members (Curriculum Vitae in Europass format)	P10_CV_EN.ZIP	P10_CV_LV.ZIP
A statement signed by the rector, director, head of the study programme or field that the knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programmes within the study field complies with the regulations on the state language knowledge and state language proficiency test for professional and official duties.	P11_RARZI LanguageConfirmationENG.doc	P11_RARZI ValodasApliecinājumsLV.edoc
A statement of the higher education institution/ college on the respective foreign language skills of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme at least at B2 level according to the European Language Proficiency Assessment levels (level distribution is available on the website www.europass.lv, if the study programme or part thereof is implemented)		
II - Description of the Study Field - 2.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation		
Summary of quantitative data on scientific and/ or applied research and / or artistic creation activities corresponding to the study field in the reporting period.	P12_Summary of Quantitative Data2.docx	P12_Kvantitatīvo datu apkopojums (2).docx
List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period.	P13_Publications (2).docx	P13_Publikācijas.docx
II - Description of the Study Field - 2.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation		
List of cooperation agreements, including the agreements for providing internship	P14_List of cooperation agreements.docx	P14_sadarbības līgumi.docx
Statistical data on the teaching staff and the students from abroad	P15_Statistical data on foreign students and teaching staff.docx	P15_Statistikas dati par ārvalstu studējošajiem un mācītājiem.docx
Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of students (by specifying the study programmes)	P16_outgoing and incoming mobility of students.docx	P16_studējošo izejošo un ienākošo mobilitāte.docx
Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of the teaching staff	P17_Statistical data on incoming and outgoing mobile teaching staff.docx	P17_Statistikas dati par mācītāpēku ienākošo un izejošo mobilitāti.docx
II - Description of the Study Field - 2.6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures		
Report on the implementation of the recommendations received both in the previous accreditation and in the licensing and/ or change assessment procedures and/ or the procedures for the inclusion of the study programme on the accreditation form of the study field.	P18_recommendations.docx	P18_rekomendācijas.docx
An application for the evaluation of the study field signed with a secure electronic signature	RARZI_ApplicationFinal.docx	RARZI_novērtējuma_iesniegums.edoc
III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Sample of the diploma and its supplement to be issued for completing the study programme		
For academic study programmes - Opinion of the Council of Higher Education in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (table) (if applicable)		
Statistics on the students in the reporting period		
III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance with the study programme with the State Education Standard		
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard or the requirements for professional qualification (if applicable)		
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme		
The curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)		
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules		

Description of the organisation of the internship of the students (if applicable)		
III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.4. Teaching Staff		
Confirmation that the academic staff of the doctoral study programme includes not less than five doctors, of which at least three are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the branch or sub-branch of science in which the study programme intends to award a scientific degree (if applicable)		
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 (if applicable)		

## Other annexes

Name of document	Document
Saskaņojums ar Augstākās izglītības padomei (par uzņemšanas prasībām)	Nr_11_RARZI_pap uzņemšanas pras.edoc
ENG_ saskaņojums ar AIP (par uzņemšanas prasībām)	AIP-COORDINATION_Letter-eng.docx



# Religion and Theology (43221)

Study field	Religion and Theology
ProcedureStudyProgram.Name	Religion and Theology
Education classification code	43221
Type of the study programme	Academic bachelor study programme
Name of the study programme director	Johana
Surname of the study programme director	Laue
E-mail of the study programme director	studijudala@rarzi.lv
Title of the study programme director	MA theol
Phone of the study programme director	26727003
Goal of the study programme	Offer students integrated acquisition of theoretical knowledge and research skills in Catholic theology and religious sciences needed for further studies, research and professional activity in line with the Instruction on Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences ( <a href="https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20080628_istruzione_en.html">https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20080628_istruzione_en.html</a> ).
Tasks of the study programme	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To acquire general and specific knowledge in philosophy, Catholic theology and religious sciences, and to learn about scientific and research methodology within the framework of this discipline</li> <li>2. To learn the skills needed for applying knowledge in research activity</li> <li>3. To learn the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- take scientific approach to identifying and solving problems based on the teaching of Church and Catholic theology</li> <li>- take responsibility and initiative</li> <li>- make decisions and find creative solutions in a changing environment</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Results of the study programme	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ability to define and explain fundamental concepts of Catholic theology, to logically justify and explain directions of magisterium of the Church</li> <li>2. Ability to independently recognise and analyse philosophical foundations of Catholic theology, and to explain matters related to the history of the Church and culture</li> <li>3. Ability to recognise the aspects that link theology with psychology and pedagogy; ability to justify and discuss their role in the space of public discussions in Latvia</li> </ol> <p>Skills:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Ability to independently structure the learning process and to responsibly use information technologies in professional work, in research, as well as in gathering, creating and sharing of digital content</li> <li>5. Ability to justify research activity with Holy Scriptures, teaching of the magisterium of the Church and principles of methodology in humanities; ability to use field-specific terminology in English</li> <li>6. Ability to independently gather, select and analyse information by addressing the problem and providing synthesis from perspective of different angles of theology; ability to have a well-grounded discussion with experts and general public on matters related to the dialogue between religion, culture, society and research</li> </ol> <p>Competences:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Ability to demonstrate integral view on a human being by synthesising knowledge and skills acquired during studies in philosophy, theology, ethics, psychology, pedagogy, history of culture and religions</li> </ol>
Final examination upon the completion of the study programme	Keyword exam Defending of bachelor's thesis

## Study programme forms

### Part time studies - 3 years, 3 months - latvian

Study type and form	Part time studies
Duration in full years	3
Duration in month	3
Language	latvian
Amount (CP)	120
Admission requirements (in English)	Secondary education, entrance exam (request sent to the Higher Education Council 02.08.2023.)
Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	Bachelor's degree of humanities in religion and theology
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	-

### Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University	RĪGA	KATOĻU IELA 16B, LATGALES PRIEKŠPILSĒTA, RĪGA, LV-1003

## 3.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

**3.1.1. Description and analysis of changes in the parameters of the study programme made since the issuance of the previous accreditation form of the study field or issuance of the study programme license, if the study programme is not included on the accreditation form of the study field, including changes planned within the evaluation procedure of the study field evaluation procedure.**

Name of the study programme was changed. During the reporting period, name of the programme was Religion; however, the name suggested for accreditation is Religion and Theology. The new name of the programme better reflects the content of the programme because it is indicative of the courses in Catholic theology, which are included in the programme and comprise a significant part of the programme.

In accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 240 on the National Standard for Academic Education and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 322 on Classification of Education in Latvia, the title of degree awarded is changed from bachelor's degree of humanities in religion to bachelor's degree of humanities in religion and theology. The new title better reflects the content of the study programme, which contains essential study courses in Catholic theology.

During the reporting period, legal and actual address of RARZI was changed, namely, study premises and administrative office were relocated from Klosterā iela 4 in the Old Town Riga to Katoļu iela 16B in Riga, and the new premises better suit the needs of studies, are more comfortable to students and are more accessible to people both from Riga and other areas.

Type and level of study programme, as well as duration and format of studies have not changed. Goals and objectives of the study programme, as well as expected learning outcomes, were clarified in accordance with Latvian Qualifications Framework.

During the accreditation period, minor changes were introduced to the content of the study programme. Course sections A and B of the study programme remained unchanged; however, on the grounds of the highlights in the study field, as well as suggestions made by the students and graduates, and with the aim to improve the quality of studies, changes were made to free elective course section C.

The RARZI Bachelor's programme has the following additional requirements for admission: an entrance exam in the form of interview about the motivation. These additional requirements have been submitted to the Council of the Higher Education (AIP) for approval on 2.08.2023 (see RARZI letter to AIP under *Other Annexes*).

**3.1.2. Analysis and assessment of the study programme compliance with the study field. Analysis of the interrelation between the code of the study programme, the degree, professional qualification/professional qualification requirements or the degree and professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and the admission requirements. Description of the duration and scope of the implementation of the study programme (including different options of the study programme implementation) and evaluation of its usefulness.**

Academic bachelor's study programme in religion and theology (hereinafter referred to as the BSP) offers in-depth studies in general concepts, fundamental principles and history of research methodologies of religious sciences, philosophy and theology, as well as in topical problems from interdisciplinary perspective; it also offers in-depth studies in philosophy, dogmatics, moral theology and history of the Church, helps developing research and analytical skills in religious sciences, provides an insight into the sources of Christian faith and practice (the New and the Old Testament and their interpretations, history of ideas of religion and religious institutions, Christian practices – worship, pastoral care, education in parishes) based on Catholic tradition and the study of Catholic theology. The programme uses ecumenical approach and takes into account social needs, thus providing professional specialists that meet the needs of the Church and the society. The goal of true education is to form a human person by taking into account both its ultimate purpose and calling, and the calling of a human person to serve their society.

The BSP corresponds to the study field Religion and Theology. Name of the programme reflects the content of the programme. The code of the programme, the degree awarded, the goals and objectives, the learning outcomes and the admission requirements are interlinked. The title of the awarded degree, namely, bachelor of humanities in religion and theology, is chosen in accordance with the thematic groups set forth in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 240 of 13 May 2014 on the National Standard for Academic Education, the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 322 of 13 June 2017 on the Classification of Education in Latvia and the requirements set by the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University.

Code of the study programme is 43221.

The first two digits in the code, namely, 4 and 3, indicate that academic education (bachelor's studies) can be obtained after acquisition of general or professional secondary education. The third, the fourth and the fifth digit, namely, 2, 2 and 1, characterise the thematic area, namely, humanities, and the group of study programmes, namely, religion and theology (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 322 of 13 June 2017). The code of the programme is accurate and corresponds to the programme parameters.

The name of the BSP corresponds to the field of study Religion and Theology. It also corresponds to the degree awarded and learning outcomes. The Rules on Admission set uniform admission requirements – secondary education and interview on motivation to choose particular studies. They ensure that all students can adjust to the study programme to an equal extent. The goal, objectives and learning outcomes of the BSP in religion and theology meet the criteria, which, according to the classification of education in Latvia, define the set of knowledge, skills and competences on level 6 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework. On the other hand, the goal, objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme meet and are coordinated with the requirements of the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University. The goal of the BSP in religion and theology is to provide students with an integrated theoretical knowledge and research skills in Catholic theology and religious studies, prepare them for further studies, research and professional activity in accordance with the [Instruction on Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences](#).

The goal of the bachelor's study programme is to train young specialists in theology and religion with a view of further studies at master's level and lifelong learning. The didactic concept of the programme is based on the goals of the Institute defined by the Congregation for Catholic Education of Vatican, which envisages not only academic outcomes of the study process but also personal formation in the process of studies. The goal of training specialists is also reflected in the programme's objective, which supports the development of competence of a researcher. Expected

learning outcomes are in line with the goal and objectives of the study programme. Graduates can present their knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts of Catholic theology, they are familiar with methods of research in humanities, and they are able to independently plan, organise and manage their own research and professional activity. Implementation of the study programme is closely linked to spiritual formation of students, as well as involvement of students in the activities of parishes, Church movements and groups.

The study programme is delivered in the format of part-time onsite studies; its duration is 3 years and 3 months, and during this period, courses with a total volume of 120 credit points are covered. The volume, structure and content of the study programme are designed for students to acquire knowledge, skills and competences defined in the learning outcomes of the study programme in the utmost quality. All members of teaching staff have relevant degrees in theology, philosophy, psychology and pedagogy. The volume of the study programme allows taking courses related to all areas of the study field. Thus, duration of the study programme is sufficient for reaching the goals and objectives of the programme to full extent and in the utmost quality.

After completing bachelor's studies, graduates have the opportunity to continue studies on master's level and thus continue acquiring new knowledge and developing professional competences.

### **3.1.3. Economic and/ or social substantiation of the study programme, analysis of graduates' employment.**

Bachelor's study programme in religion and theology offers high-level education in humanities with focus on religious studies in modern era and the past.

Religious studies give an insight into the past and present of the humanity, and it develops the most essential skills, such as critical thinking and analytic writing. One of the main skills, which is developed during the study process and is essential in the career of each individual, is the skill of learning (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/324332-par-izglitibas-attistibas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam> Article "3. CURRENT TRENDS AND VISION FOR EDUCATION IN 2027" (available only in Latvian)). Learning is usually associated with a process of acquiring new knowledge, developing certain skills and shaping or changing attitudes. In other words, the aim of learning is to improve one's competences (knowledge, skills and attitude) in a particular sphere of life. However, learning also has a direct impact on the quality of our daily life and emotional well-being, thus the developed competences is not the only tangible outcome of learning. Studying makes us happier, and it helps us maintain our mental and physical health, which is imperative for a comprehensive development of an individual and individual's active participation in public life.

The BSP graduates can work in parishes of the Church, thus giving a unique contribution to the development of the humanitarian life in Latvia. They can work in areas related to research of religion and analysis of current events and processes (universities, institutes, mass media), in administration (public administration, religious organisations), as well as they can practice in churches and other religious organisations, and teach religious education or work for non-governmental organisations (in fields related to human rights, social work, etc.). The knowledge obtained during studies allows graduates to become teachers, civil servants, business analysts, politicians, social workers, charity workers, journalists, etc.

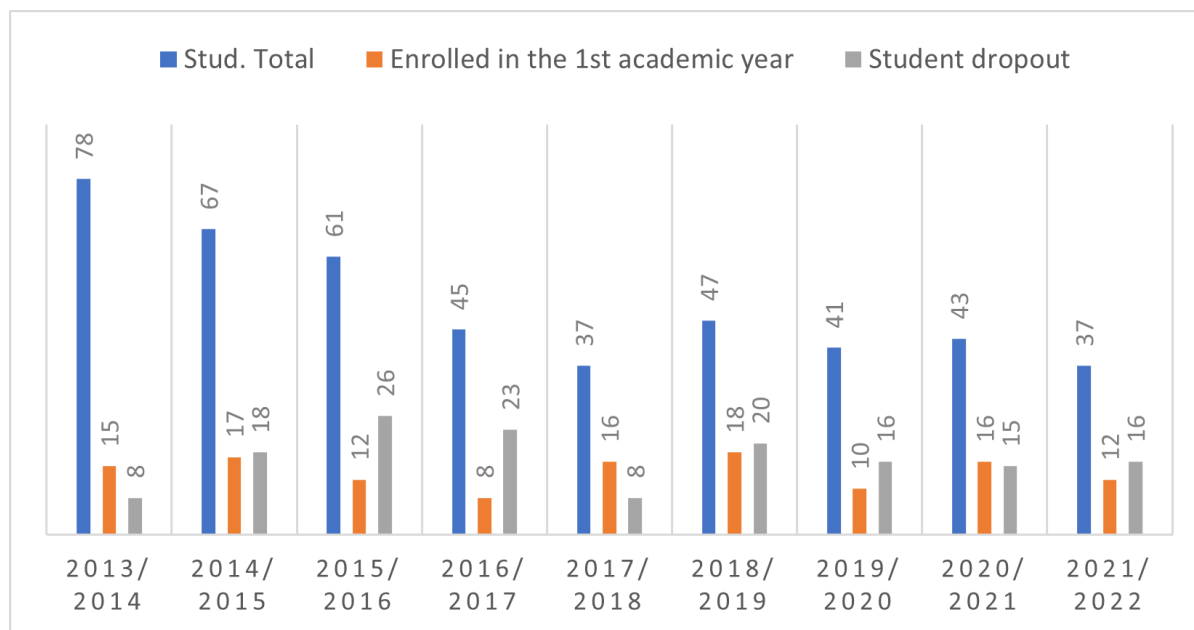
#### **3.1.3. 1. table**

## Employment of the graduates 2019-2022

	Number of graduates BSP	BSP graduates who continue their studies in the Master's programme	Information about employment
2021/2022	7	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• since September teacher at Barbele Primary School, volunteering in the Chemin Neuf community.</li> <li>• Senior Researcher, Associate Professor at RTU</li> <li>• Cartographic Engineer at the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency, volunteer at Radio Marija Latvija, catechist.</li> <li>• Environmental engineer at SIA "Vides un Geoloģijas Serviss", volunteer at Radio Marija Latvija, catechist.</li> <li>• Warehouse manager at "Viss Visapkārt Tīrs", volunteer catechist in the parish.</li> <li>• Expert at the Central Statistical Office, volunteer at Riga St. Albert parish, Member of the Alpha Course team.</li> <li>• - RAKUS Hospital nurse</li> </ul>
2020/2021	4	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• museum educator and tourism organiser at the recreation complex "Mikēlis", volunteer at the Brunava parish</li> <li>• runs Sunday school in the parish</li> <li>• IT specialist</li> <li>• construction work in the parish, catechesis</li> </ul>
2019/2020	7	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financier in the State Agency for Insurance, volunteer work in the parish as -deacon.</li> <li>• computer maintenance specialist, catechesis in the parish</li> <li>• office administrator</li> <li>• hairdresser, voluntary work in the parish</li> <li>• volunteering in the parish</li> <li>• attorney at law</li> <li>• nun, organist in the parish, catechesis for children, youth, adults.</li> </ul>
2018/2019	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of the Records Management and Archive Division of the State Border Guard Headquarters</li> <li>• Housewife, Nanny</li> </ul>

Information about the employability of the graduates was obtained through personal interviews with the graduates.

**3.1.4. Statistical data on the students of the respective study programme, the dynamics of the number of the students, and the factors affecting the changes to the number of the students. The analysis shall be broken down into different study forms, types, and languages.**



The RARZI bachelor's degree showed a significant drop in 2016/2017 (similar to the master's degree), after which the trend remains stable with slight shifts. The reversal in 2016/2017 can be attributed to the change in student accounting principles, the move to other premises and the insufficient promotional campaign.

Increasing number of applicants are people who have their own families and are employed. The average age of students is also increasing, and there is an increasing number of students who already have a profession or in some instances even a bachelor's or master's degree in another study field. Thus, more frequently students are motivated by desire for personal spiritual growth and opportunity to serve in parishes, Church movements or groups. These factors prevent some students from timely and fulfilment of all requirements and may be a reason for dropping out. Regardless of the attempts made by the management of RARZI and the Director of the study programme, one-on-one negotiations and motivational efforts, many students decide to drop out. Surveys show that in general students appreciate the organisation of studies and quality of the bachelor's study programme.

**3.1.5. Substantiation of the development of the joint study programme and description and evaluation of the choice of partner universities, including information on the development and implementation of the joint study programme (if applicable).**

## 3.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

**3.2.1. Analysis of the content of the study programme. Assessment of the interrelation between the information included in the study courses/ modules, the intended learning outcomes, the set aims and other indicators with the aims of the study course/ module and the aims and intended outcomes of the study programme. Assessment of the relevance of the content of the study courses/ modules and compliance with the needs of the relevant industry, labour market and with the trends in science on how and whether the content of the study courses/ modules is updated in line with the development trends of the relevant industry, labour market, and science.**

Content of the bachelor's study programme in religion and theology is devised in line with the requirements set for the bachelor's study programmes by the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Regulations on Study Programmes at RARZI; they are also based on the [Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 240 of 13 May 2014](#) on the National Standard for Academic Education (available only in Latvian).

The structure, courses and content of the BSP have been devised in accordance with the current needs of the labour market in the field, development trends in the field of religion and theology, as well as in line with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 240 of 13 May 2014 on the National Standard for Academic Education and the description of learning outcomes for level 6 education defined in Annex 1 (Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF)) of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 322 on Classification of Education in Latvia. The structure, courses and content of the BSP also take into account the goals and objectives of the study programme.

During the reporting period, changes were made to the goals, objectives and learning outcomes of the BSP and minor changes were made to the content of the BSP, by taking into account current developments. The content of the study courses was updated to include recent documents of the Catholic Church and papal encyclicals, thus making focus on issues relevant to modern society. Correspondence of changes in the BSP with the goal, objectives and learning outcomes of the study field is monitored by the management of RARZI; the content of the course is monitored by updating the content, reference materials and other resources, and by applying student-centred learning and teaching methods both in classes and in the process of planning and organisation of independent assignments of students.

Descriptions of study courses and final examinations are of high quality and comply with the requirements of regulatory enactments; study content is topical and mutually complementary, it meets the goals of the study programme, enables achievement of learning outcomes and meets the needs of the study area and scientific trends.

Student surveys, as well as opinions and suggestions expressed by students are also important tool in improvement of study courses. Cooperation and exchange of ideas with employers on recent developments in practical work is a significant impetus for updating study courses.

The BSP consists of compulsory, compulsory elective and free elective study courses with a total volume of 120 credit points (180 ECTS).

Traditionally, the BSP has consisted of the following sections of courses: the compulsory section (A), which includes the most essential compulsory courses in the field, such as History of the Church and Patrology, Dogmatic Theology, Ethics, History of Philosophy, Philosophical Anthropology, Fundamental Theology, Spiritual Theology, Gnoseology, Introduction to Biblical Exegesis, New Testament Exegesis, Canon Law, History of Culture, Liturgy, Metaphysics, Modern Languages/English Language, Moral Theology, History of World Religions, Psychology, Seminar on

Theological Method, Old Testament Exegesis, Environmental Sustainability and Civilian Defence. The content and volume of these courses are coordinated with the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University.

Courses are distributed throughout academic years according to the traditional approach to the studies in religion and theology. Initial focus is placed on philosophy (History of Philosophy, Gnoseology, Metaphysics) and spiritual formation (Spiritual Theology, Seminar on Spiritual Theology) with gradual introduction to theological studies (Introduction to Biblical Exegesis, New Testament Exegesis, Moral Theology, Liturgy, Dogmatics) are introduced gradually. Furthermore, in the first year, students begin courses in History of the Church and Patrology, Psychology, History of Culture and English Language.

In accordance with the requirements of the Faculty, Catholic Dogmatics and Moral Theology are taught during all three years of studies granting 16 credit points (24 ECTS) and 10 credit points (15 ECTS) respectively. During the second year, courses in philosophy (Ethics, Anthropology) and theology (Dogmatics, Moral Theology, Fundamental Theology, New Testament Exegesis) continue; and they are supplemented with Old Testament Exegesis and the Seminar on Theological Method, which provide students the knowledge and skills necessary for research.

In the second year, students begin courses of section B, which continue into the third year. Section B courses are comprised of compulsory elective courses (section B1 or section B2) and courses open to all students, such as Social Doctrine of the Church, Religious Education and Pastoral Theology. Students can choose between compulsory elective module B1 (Dogmatics) and compulsory elective module B2 (History).

During the second year, students work on a term paper, which is usually linked to the module chosen from section B courses and is the first step in choosing the topic for the final thesis and learning first research skills in humanities.

During the third year, students continue to study the main courses in Catholic Theology, as well as both section B and section C (free electives) courses, they work on bachelor's thesis (10 credit points) and prepare for the final examination (keyword exam).

The bachelor's study programme provides students with the opportunity to obtain a bachelor's degree in religion and theology in a sequential manner and in accordance with the requirements set by the Faculty, and thus achieve the goal of the studies and learn necessary knowledge, skills and competences.

**3.2.2. In the case of master's and doctoral study programmes, specify and provide the justification as to whether the degrees are awarded in view of the developments and findings in the field of science or artistic creation. In the case of a doctoral study programme, provide a description of the main research roadmaps and the impact of the study programme on research and other education levels (if applicable).**

**3.2.3. Assessment of the study programme including the study course/ module implementation methods by indicating what the methods are, and how they contribute to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study courses and the aims of the study programme. In the case of a joint study programme, or in case the study programme is**



**implemented in a foreign language or in the form of distance learning, describe in detail the methods used to deliver such a study programme. Provide an explanation of how the student-centred principles are taken into account in the implementation of the study process.**

Methods used in implementation, including evaluation, of studies contribute to achievement of course and programme goals and learning outcomes, and they take into account the requirements of student-centred teaching and learning.

The study programme is implemented in a format of part-time onsite studies, with lectures and classes held on Friday evenings and Saturdays. Principles of student-centred education are taken into account in the study process.

- Student representatives are members of the Council of RARZI and are taking part in meetings; they are welcome to express their views and their opinions on all relevant issues are taken into account. RARZI administration holds regular meetings with student groups.
- The study programme is implemented in a manner that supports and inspires students. Small-sized study groups enable individual approach; lectures and classes are interactive due to modern technology. The academic staff has a high level of education and is motivated to apply innovative learning and teaching methods and to regularly update the content of courses.
- RARZI supports student mobility and recognises study courses taken during mobility by coordinating this process with the Faculty. If possible, recognition and equivalence of courses taken in other study programmes is ensured.

Student-centred approach is taken into account when updating the content of study courses, and particular attention is paid to meaningful formulation of learning outcomes, which subsequently facilitates a dialogue between teaching staff and students on study content, as well as format of studies and methods used in study organisation. Properly formulated learning outcomes, in turn, improve understanding of students and increase their sense of ownership over their own learning process, self-evaluation and understanding of evaluation.

Oral, written and combined methods of study and evaluation are used during studies, in interim tests and in final examinations. Teaching staff predominantly uses methods that encourage active participation, critical thinking and reflection of students. A variety of methods are used to acquire and consolidate knowledge, including lectures, seminars, individual and group assignments, discussions, etc. Methods, which focus on activity of students, are predominant as they facilitate achievement of learning outcomes, namely, acquisition and consolidation of knowledge and skills and development of competences.

Classes, lectures and seminars encourage students to engage in dialogue and discussions; group assignments are also used. Teaching staff encourages students to ask questions, provides clarifications, and, if needed, helps students with finding additional resources.

Independent assignments are particularly important in the part-time onsite format of studies. Independent assignments are carefully planned and widely used. Types of independent assignments are diverse and their choice is based on the goal, content and expected learning outcomes of each particular course. Students write essays and papers, as well as prepare oral reports and presentations.

In the study process, teaching staff uses methods, tests and evaluation criteria that match the goal

of the course and expected learning outcome. During the study process, students receive support and feedback from teaching staff; and, in the beginning of each course, members of teaching staff inform students about the requirements, independent assignments and criteria set for successful completion of the course. Evaluation criteria are made public in advance. Evaluation reveals the extent to which students have achieved the expected learning outcomes

Both formative and summative evaluations are used. Formative evaluation takes place during the entire study process and involves control questions asked during contact hours and discussions on independent assignments taken during the study process.

Summative evaluation (a test or exam) takes place at the end of each study course. Summative evaluation tests may be executed as written tests (taken on paper or electronically) or oral discussions. Several summative evaluations may be executed in courses that last longer than one academic year.

In the end of studies, students choose topics of interest and, in collaboration with a supervising tutor of their choice, draft and defend bachelor's theses. Thesis demonstrates the ability of a student to link theoretical knowledge with research by applying theological method. In bachelor's theses and in the final examination (keyword exam), students demonstrate an integral view on a human being by synthesising the knowledge and skills acquired in philosophy, theology, ethics, psychology, pedagogy, cultural studies and the history of religions.

After the state emergency was declared in March 2020, organisation of the study process was changed significantly, namely, studies were organised remotely. During the Covid-19 pandemic, lectures and classes were held remotely by using Google Meet and other online tools available to RARZI. While in practice it was proved that face-to-face interaction is an essential part of the study process, it was concluded that e-learning platform is also necessary. Such a platform is being developed and is expected to be introduced as of academic year 2023/2024.

**3.2.4. If the study programme envisages an internship, describe the internship opportunities offered to students, provision and work organization, including whether the higher education institution/ college helps students to find an internship place. If the study programme is implemented in a foreign language, provide information on how internship opportunities are provided in a foreign language, including for foreign students. To provide analysis and evaluation of the connection of the tasks set for students during the internship included in the study programme with the learning outcomes of the study programme (if applicable).**

**3.2.5. Evaluation and description of the promotion opportunities and the promotion process provided to the students of the doctoral study programme (if applicable).**

**3.2.6. Analysis and assessment of the topics of the final theses of the students, their relevance in the respective field, including the labour market, and the marks of the final**

## theses.

The final part of studies consists of two elements:

1. defence of bachelor's thesis;
2. final examination (oral keyword exam).

The Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University (hereinafter referred to as the Faculty) determines the procedure for final examinations. Students choose topics for their theses in the second year of studies. Compulsory elective courses (section B1 and section B2) and term papers for these courses help students to decide on a topic that is relevant in Catholic theology and are in line with their personal research interests. Students and their supervising tutors collaborate closely throughout the entire process of writing bachelor's thesis. Seminar on Theological Method, which is included in the study programme, helps ensuring high-quality research. Bachelor's theses are presented to commission in an open session. Theses are evaluated by the supervising tutor, the reviewer and members of the commission. 10-grade evaluation system is used in evaluation of bachelor's theses; members of the commission decide on the grade after hearing the opinion of the supervising tutor and the reviewer. If necessary, the final grade is decided by vote.

### **Topics of bachelor's theses defended between 2018 and 2022**

Longing of the Human Soul for God as a Source of Music

Legal Aspects of the Seal of Confession

Love as Path Taken by Individual towards Knowing One's Self and God in encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* by Pope Benedict XVI

Moral Aspects and Formation of Communication in Community Life in Parts 1 and 2 of Jean Vanier's book *Community, a Place for Forgiveness and Joy*

Testimony of God as a Guarantee of His Presence in the Old Testament

Virtue of Moderation in Formation of Christian Character

Spiritual Companionship and Its Topicality

Liturgy of Good Friday in Latvia

Beauty in Liturgical Celebration According to Section 35 of Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* by Pope Benedict XVI

Mystery of Human Existence Before Death in the Context of Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*

Healings by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Mark

Spiritual Companionship as Pastoral Ministry in Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis

Theological Aspects in Maria Montessori's Education

Aspects of Knowledge of God in the Context of the Modernist Critique of Heresy

Theoretical Problem of Evil

Missionary Calling of Young People as Laity in the Teachings of Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI

and Pope Francis

Understanding of Hope in the Context of the Meaning of Life in Encyclical *Spe Salvi* by Benedict XVI

Paradigm of the Mystery of a Woman in *Letter to Women* by John Paul II

Call to Holiness: Decision-making in Ignatian Spirituality

Understanding Hope in the Context of Modern Challenges in Encyclical *Spe Salvi* by Benedict XVI

Pope Francis' Teaching on Fraternity as the Epiphenomenon of the Virtue of Love in the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

The Word of God and the Eucharist in the Ministry of Permanent Deacon, Based on Dogmatic Constitution of the Second Vatican Council *Lumen Gentium*.

Pastoral Return: Example of the Roman Catholic Parish of Sigulda.

*Memento Mori*: Existential Meaning of Contemplation of Eternity and Death on the Path of True Humanity and Search for God.

Pastoral Ministry of Layman in the Parish from the Perspective of Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* by Pope Francis.

The choice of topics reflects interest of students in Catholic theology. Topics chosen for bachelor's theses range from philosophical concepts (beauty, love, hope, suffering, etc.) and their analysis from the perspective of Catholic theology, to matters relevant to individual students (Montessori education, experience in the parish, decision-making). Topics of bachelor's theses also include current issues and their reflection in the teaching of the Church, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, papal encyclicals (spiritual companionship, youth ministry, etc.). The choice of topics and the depth of their exploration also depend on the chosen compulsory elective courses (sections B1 or B2) and on students' experience in life of faith or issues relevant to it.

In general, the wide range of topics, as well as the process of writing and defending bachelor's theses proves that students have achieved the expected learning outcomes of the programme, have acquired knowledge in philosophy and theology, have acquired sufficient skills in research, information technology and foreign languages, and are able to demonstrate an integral view on a human being. In the period between 2013 and 2022, 28 bachelor's theses were defended in the BSP. Their grades range from 4 (1 case) to 10 (3 cases) with the majority of bachelor's theses being evaluated with grades 6, 7, 8 or 9.

With regard to the final examination, RARZI sends a set of 30 topics (keywords) to the Faculty; the Faculty approves it for the next three years. In the beginning of each academic year (by 15 September), RARZI management selects from the approved list 10 topics that will be used in final oral examinations in the following calendar year. The Faculty must approve this selection and its content; once the selection is approved, the information is immediately shared with the students. Final oral examination lasts approximately 30 minutes and is held in front of a commission composed of three members of the teaching staff and a chairperson (the Dean of the Faculty or his/her delegate). 24 hours before the examination, students pick their topics of final exam by drawing lots from the set of keywords approved for the year. Each student presents the topic to members of the commission; afterwards, members of the commission may ask questions both on the topic presented and on another topic chosen by the student from the list of topics approved for the year. 10-grade evaluation system is used by the commission to evaluate student's answers. Grades received during the review period range from 6 to 10, mostly 7 and 8.

The following oral examination topics (keywords) were approved for the period 2021 – 2023: faith

and mind, image and likeness, love, holiness, life, truth, flesh, individual, faith and history, revelation, hope, the Word, knowledge, human being, salvation, faith, original sin and sin, marriage, communion, dialogue, incarnation, the Church, eschatology, the Trinity, sacraments, grace, acquittal, Eucharist, resurrection.

In covering these topics, students are required to demonstrate an integral view on a human being, by synthesising knowledge and skills acquired during studies of philosophy, theology, ethics, psychology, pedagogy, cultural studies and history of religions, and to express personal understanding of and attitude towards the issue under discussion.

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

**3.3.1. Assessment of the compliance of the resources and provision (study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision) with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the learning outcomes to be achieved by providing the respective examples.**

Resources and support available to the BSP are sufficient for programme implementation. The programme is implemented in rooms fitted for lectures and classes, which are located in the complex of buildings at Katoļu iela 16/18. Rooms are equipped with modern technical solutions needed for the use of information technologies. As indicated in Section 3 of Part 2, infrastructure is used jointly with the Riga Institute of Theology and the Inter-diocesan Theological Seminary.

Study and research facilities meet the needs of bachelor's study programme. Students have access to a comfortable and well-equipped study environment in all premises of the Institute, namely, between lectures or at any other time students have access to environment which enables them to study also outside the library. There is Wi-Fi internet connection, power sockets, etc.

Financial resources necessary for implementation of the programme are ensured within the framework of the study field. Funding of the programme, as well as funding of the study field, consists of funds provided by the Catholic Church of Latvia, funds provided by foreign Catholic foundations and tuition fees paid by students.

**3.3.2. Assessment of the study provision and scientific base support, including the resources provided within the framework of cooperation with other science institutes and higher education institutions (applicable to doctoral study programmes) (if applicable).**

**3.3.3. Indicate data on the available funding for the corresponding study programme, its funding sources and their use for the development of the study programme. Provide information on the costs per one student within this study programme, indicating the**

**items included in the cost calculation and the percentage distribution of funding between the specified items. The minimum number of students in the study programme in order to ensure the profitability of the study programme (indicating separately the information on each language, type and form of the study programme implementation).**

The required funds are raised in roughly equal shares from the following sources:

1. Latvian Bishops' Conference funds;
2. Funds from foreign Catholic foundations (e.g. the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Pope's Fund; the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops);
3. Tuition fees paid by students. (For example, for the academic year 2022/2023 for the Bachelor's programme 800 Euro per year)

Cost-effectiveness in the years 2017-2022:

2017: 0,24

2018: 0,31

2019: 1,08

2020: 1,26

2021: 0,26

2022: 0,15

The prime cost of the BSP per student in the academic year 2021/2022 was EUR 2676.60. In determining the prime cost, expenses for maintenance, heating and electricity are not taken into account. For the programme to be cost-effective, there have to be 10-12 students each academic year (a total of 40-48 students in the programme).

Specific projects are being carried out to develop the BSP, funded by German Catholic foundations (Renovabis, Bonifatiuswerk, Kirche in Not). These funds are used for research and for the development of the BSP: the development and validation of new courses of study, support for scientific research, funding for conferences, symposia, continuing education events, the development of teaching and methodological materials, the translation and publication of Church documents. These sources of funding are stable, operate in the long term (throughout the lifetime of RARZI) and contribute to financial stability..

## **3.4. Teaching Staff**

**3.4.1. Assessment of the compliance of the qualification of the teaching staff members (academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants) involved in the implementation of the study programme with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments. Provide information on how the qualification of the teaching staff members contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes.**

Qualifications of teaching staff involved in implementation of the study programme comply with the requirements set for implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in regulatory enactments; qualifications of teaching staff are also appropriate for ensuring achievement of goals and learning outcomes of the study programme and relevant study courses. All members of teaching staff, who are involved in study programme as permanent teaching staff or visiting teaching staff, have at least a master's degree in a related study field; all members of teaching staff, who are involved in the programme, are professionals in their field and are specialised in the respective study course. The study field and study programmes are implemented by highly-qualified and highly-skilled teaching staff.

Due to the specific nature of the programme and the small number of students, in addition to the permanent members of teaching staff elected by RARZI, visiting teaching staff is also involved in the implementation of the programme. Qualifications of teaching staff comply with the requirements set for implementation of the programme and the requirements set forth in regulatory enactments, as well as certifies the relevance of the qualifications of the participating teaching staff to the achievement of the goals and tasks of the study program.

A total of 30 members of teaching staff are involved in implementation of the programme. Thirteen (43.3%) of them are elected by RARZI, the rest are visiting or guest teaching staff. Of the permanent elected members of teaching staff, 7 (53%) are professors and associate professors, 8 (61.5%) hold a doctorate degree in theology (3), philosophy (2), philology (1), pedagogy (1) or psychology (1). Other members of teaching staff hold master's degree or a licentiate degree.

The guest lecturers include 4 Doctors of Theology, mostly professors at the Riga Theological Inst

All involved teaching staff have versatile knowledge and skills in both academic, scientific and practical fields, including cooperation with church and support institutions, which provides the opportunity for students to go on study tours during their studies. The qualification of the teaching staff is also confirmed by their active participation in the academic and scientific work of other higher education institutions, as well as the performance of various institutional duties, not only at RARZI, but also at the international level.

#### **3.4.2. Analysis and assessment of the changes to the composition of the teaching staff over the reporting period and their impact on the study quality.**

Composition of teaching staff has been relatively stable with only minor changes during the reporting period. Changes in the composition of the teaching staff are mostly related to generational change, studies for doctorate degrees or appointments to other positions needed to the Church.

In the period since 2013, professor who taught New Testament Exegesis and Old Testament Exegesis died. RARZI invited a visiting professor to continue teaching these courses, as there are few specialists in Latvia who can teach such courses in Catholic doctrine. The invited visiting professor holds a doctorate degree in theology and has sufficient teaching experience, as well as extensive experience in translating biblical texts; thus these courses are still taught at a proper level.

In 2013, a new course in Information Technology was added to the study programme, and

accordingly an IT specialist with a master's degree was hired as a lecturer for this course. The Council of RARZI decided to exclude this course from the bachelor's study programme as of 2017, because students in this programme had already acquired basic information technology skills prior to their studies at RARZI. However, the lecturer continues to teach in the professional master's study programme at RARZI.

In the period since 2013, a member of teaching staff, who taught moral theology and who is currently an associate professor, has completed doctorate studies.

In view of the need for generational change, two new members of teaching staff with licentiate degree in theology were attracted to the study programme; they are teaching History of the Church and Patrology, and Liturgy. Both of them are studying for their doctorate degrees in Rome and are expected to defend their doctorate thesis in 2024.

Due to the nomination for other duties and closing of the Catechetical Centre, a member of teaching staff with doctorate degree in theology, who taught courses in Catechesis and Religious Education, stopped lecturing at RARZI. Now these courses are taught by a lecturer holding a master's degree and having longstanding experience in catechesis.

Members of teaching staff, who taught foreign languages, have changed as well, namely, after 10 years of service the lecturer in English language left RARZI for personal reasons. A temporary replacement was found; however, the search for a suitable permanent lecturer continues.

The above-mentioned changes, as well as the arrival of new professionals at RARZI and their involvement in the study process, have not reduced the quality of studies and it remains at a consistently high level.

**3.4.3. Information on the number of the scientific publications of the academic staff members, involved in the implementation of doctoral study programme, as published during the reporting period by listing the most significant publications published in Scopus or WoS CC indexed journals. As for the social sciences, humanitarian sciences, and the science of art, the scientific publications published in ERIH+ indexed journals or peer-reviewed monographs may be additionally specified. Information on the teaching staff included in the database of experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the relevant field of science (total number, name of the lecturer, field of science in which the teaching staff has the status of an expert and expiration date of the Latvian Council of Science expert) (if applicable).**

**3.4.4. Information on the participation of the academic staff, involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme, in scientific projects as project managers or prime contractors/ subproject managers/ leading researchers by specifying the name of the relevant project, as well as the source and the amount of the funding. Provide information on the reporting period (if applicable).**



**3.4.5. Assessment of the cooperation between the teaching staff members by specifying the mechanisms used to promote the cooperation and ensure the interrelation between the study programme and study courses/ modules. Specify also the proportion of the number of the students and the teaching staff within the study programme (at the moment of the submission of the Self-Assessment Report).**

Cooperation among members of teaching staff is encouraged and ensured within the framework of the same or related study courses. This is particularly important in courses which are taught during several semesters and are taught by several lecturers (for example, Dogmatics, Moral Theology, Spiritual Theology). There is also mutual cooperation between specialists teaching different courses. This prevents overlapping of course contents, as well as facilitates planning of independent assignments and research activities of students.

Cooperation among members of teaching staff is facilitated by the group of professors, which defines the goals and objectives of the Development Strategy. In accordance with the academic development objectives of RARZI and the requirements set by the Study Department, there is mutual observation of classes, as well as joint discussions on issues topical to Catholic education during continuing education courses and seminars.

Cooperation among members of teaching staff is facilitated by organising regular meetings of teaching staff and scientific conferences, as well as by joint participation in recollections and fellowship events.

If students make suggestions during the discussion with the Director of the study programme or RARZI management and these suggestions are related to teaching of a particular course, a member of teaching staff, who teaches the course, is informed, students' comments are evaluated and ways to improve the course are sought. Regular exchange of information, mutual understanding and explanatory work held among all stakeholders have had a significant impact on the content of studies.

Significant changes in cooperation among members of teaching staff have taken place since introduction of remote learning introduced due to Covid-19 pandemic. The most notable changes can be observed in patterns of behaviour, for example, rapid adaptation of lecture proceedings, adaptation of study materials to ensure their suitability for the study format, adaptation to technologies. As a result of student initiative, during this period, teaching staff has been recording lectures and improving study materials. Collegiality in practical delivering of lectures has also been important during this period. Situations, where members of teaching staff had to adapt to a hybrid format of lectures and practical assignments, were the most challenging. In general, adaptability of teaching staff is considered as very high. Whenever there was a need to improve processes, appropriate measures were taken in a dialogue between teaching staff, students, the Director of the study programme and the Director of RARZI.

There are several levels of cooperation realised within the framework of the study programme; and they enrich the study process and promote a diverse exchange of knowledge.

The student-teaching staff ratio at the time of submission of the self-assessment report is 1:1 (30 members of teaching staff and 32 students).

# Annexes

III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Sample of the diploma and its supplement to be issued for completing the study programme	P19_Diploma_BSP.zip	P19_Diploms_BSP.zip
For academic study programmes - Opinion of the Council of Higher Education in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (table) (if applicable)		
Statistics on the students in the reporting period	P20_Statistical data on students at the BSP (2).docx	Statistikas dati par studējošajiem_bak2.docx
III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance with the study programme with the State Education Standard	P21_Compliance with the study programme with the State Education Standard BSP.docx.docx	P21_atbilstība standartam BSP.docx.docx
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard or the requirements for professional qualification (if applicable)		
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme	P22 Outcome mapping_BSP_EN.docx	P22 rezultātu kartējums_BSP.docx
The curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)	P23_study plan_BSP_EN.docx	P23_studiju plans_BSP_LV.docx
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules	P24 Descriptions_of_study_courses BSP_EN.zip	P24 Kursa apraksti BSP_LV.zip
Description of the organisation of the internship of the students (if applicable)		
III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.4. Teaching Staff		
Confirmation that the academic staff of the doctoral study programme includes not less than five doctors, of which at least three are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the branch or sub-branch of science in which the study programme intends to award a scientific degree (if applicable)		
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 (if applicable)	P25_Confirmation_AL55_1_3.docx	P25_Apliecinājums_AL55_1_3.edoc

# Religion and Theology (47221)

Study field	<i>Religion and Theology</i>
ProcedureStudyProgram.Name	<i>Religion and Theology</i>
Education classification code	<i>47221</i>
Type of the study programme	<i>Professional master study programme</i>
Name of the study programme director	<i>Johanna</i>
Surname of the study programme director	<i>Laue</i>
E-mail of the study programme director	<i>studijudala@rarzi.lv</i>
Title of the study programme director	<i>MA theol</i>
Phone of the study programme director	<i>26727003</i>
Goal of the study programme	<i>Prepare specialists (pastoral counsellors), which are needed for the state and the Church, with professional studies in religion and theology that are based on appropriate theoretical background in theology, philosophy and psychology.</i>
Tasks of the study programme	<i>1. To provide in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge in theology, philosophy and psychology by developing independent learning skills of students</i> <i>2. To teach professional competences of a pastoral counsellor</i> <i>3. To prepare students for scientific research in practical theology – catechesis, pastoral and spiritual care</i>

Results of the study programme	<p><b>Knowledge:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ability to analyse and explain fundamental concepts of Catholic theology for the needs of pastoral counselling</li> <li>2. Ability to base pastoral counselling activities in philosophy and anthropology</li> <li>3. Ability to recognise and assess theories in psychology and knowledge in pedagogy, and ability to identify their applicability in the work of pastoral counsellor</li> </ol> <p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Ability to independently organise learning process and research, and ability to use professional terminology in Italian language</li> <li>5. Ability to independently facilitate further development of skills, and ability to take responsibility for one's own and team's professional results</li> <li>6. Ability to responsibly and confidently use IT solutions in compliance with personal data and private information protection requirements</li> <li>7. Ability to create and maintain a safe environment for work with children, youths and individuals with special needs, and ability to cooperate with people representing diverse cultures, religions, professions and Christian denominations</li> </ol> <p><b>Competences:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Ability to solve problems related to pastoral care in diverse institutions and groups based on theories and methodologies in humanities and social sciences, and ability to offer spiritual care and pastoral counselling to individuals, families and groups by working in a multiprofessional and multidisciplinary team and by being aware of the advantages and boundaries of the profession</li> </ol>
Final examination upon the completion of the study programme	Defending of master's thesis

## Study programme forms

### Part time studies - 2 years, 6 months - latvian

Study type and form	Part time studies
Duration in full years	2
Duration in month	6
Language	latvian
Amount (CP)	96
Admission requirements (in English)	1. Degree of humanities in religion/theology awarded by the Pontifical Lateran University of its affiliates or equivalent higher education acquired at the education institution recognised by the Dicastery of Education and Culture of Vatican, and entrance exam; 2. At least a first cycle higher education (Bachelor's degree) in the humanities or social sciences and 24 credits of basic Catholic theology, and entrance exam.

Degree to be acquired or professional qualification, or degree to be acquired and professional qualification (in english)	<i>Professional master's degree in religion and theology</i>
Qualification to be obtained (in english)	<i>Pastoral counsellor</i>

### Places of implementation

Place name	City	Address
Riga Higher Institute of Religious Sciences affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University	RĪGA	KATOĻU IELA 16B, LATGALES PRIEKŠPILSĒTA, RĪGA, LV-1003

### 3.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

**3.1.1. Description and analysis of changes in the parameters of the study programme made since the issuance of the previous accreditation form of the study field or issuance of the study programme license, if the study programme is not included on the accreditation form of the study field, including changes planned within the evaluation procedure of the study field evaluation procedure.**

During the reporting period, legal and actual address of RARZI was changed, namely, study premises and administrative office were relocated from Klosterā iela 4 in the Old Town Riga to Katoļu iela 16B in Riga, and the new premises better suit the needs of studies, are more comfortable to students and are more accessible to people both from Riga and other areas.

Name of the study programme was changed. During the reporting period, name of the programme was Religion; however, the name suggested for accreditation is Religion and Theology. The new name better reflects the content of the programme because it is indicative of the link with theology.

In accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 512 on the National Standard for the Second Level Higher Professional Education and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 322 on Classification of Education in Latvia, the title of degree awarded is changed from the master's degree in religion with qualification of pastoral counsellor to master's degree in religion and theology with qualification of pastoral counsellor. The new title better reflects the content of the study programme, which contains essential study courses in Catholic theology.

Type and level of study programme, as well as duration and format of studies have not changed. Goals and objectives of the study programme, as well as expected learning outcomes, were clarified in accordance with Latvian Qualifications Framework.

During the accreditation period, with the aim to improve the quality of study programme and by taking into account the highlights in the field, as well as suggestions of students and graduates, changes were introduced in courses offered in compulsory elective course section (B) and free elective course section (C).

**3.1.2. Analysis and assessment of the study programme compliance with the study field. Analysis of the interrelation between the code of the study programme, the degree, professional qualification/professional qualification requirements or the degree and professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and the admission requirements. Description of the duration and scope of the implementation of the study programme (including different options of the study programme implementation) and evaluation of its usefulness.**

Professional master's study programme in religion and theology (hereinafter referred to as the PMSP) is implemented within the framework of study field Religion and Theology offered by the Riga Higher Institute of Religious Science (hereinafter referred to as RARZI)

The study programme is devised in accordance with the Strategy of RARZI, the goal, objectives and

fundamental concepts of the study field, as well as in line with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 512 of 26.08.2014 on the [National Standard for the Second Level Higher Professional Education \(available only in Latvian\)](#), the National Development plan of Latvia for 2021 – 2027, as well as standards and guidelines set for the European higher education area.

The PMSP "Religion and Theology" qualification of Pastoral Counsellor meets the professional standard for pastoral counsellors. **The Professional Standard for Pastoral Counsellor** (see other annexes P34 Draft Professional Standard for Pastoral Counsellor), submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science for consideration in June 2022. In the section *Other Annexes*, a letter from RARZI to the Ministry of Education and Science asking for clarification on which standard - the old or the updated one - should be used for the preparation of the accreditation documentation and a reply from the Ministry of Education and Science stating that the accreditation documentation should be prepared according to the updated standard.

Other attachments include the draft Standard for the Profession of Pastoral Counsellor, as well as a letter from RARZI to the Director of the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dmitry Stepanov, outlining the situation in order to understand which standard - the old or the updated one - to prepare the documentation for accreditation, as well as the response of the Ministry of Education and Science, stating that the accreditation documentation should be prepared according to the updated standard.

The PMSP corresponds to the study field Religion and Theology. Name of the PMSP reflects areas, in which students can specialise, namely, religion and theology. It also reflects the degree awarded and expected learning outcomes, which are related to theology, religion and relevant research. Qualification earned matches the standard set for the profession of pastoral counsellor (fifth level of professional qualification (PQL level 5) and seventh level in Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF level 7)).

The code of the programme, the degree awarded, the goals and objectives, the learning outcomes and the admission requirements are interlinked.

Code of the study programme is 47221.

The first two digits in the code, namely, 4 and 7, indicate that this is the second level higher professional education (professional master's degree and fifth level of professional qualification) and it matches the seventh level in Latvian Qualifications Framework. The third, the fourth and the fifth digit, namely, 2, 2 and 1, characterise the thematic area, namely, humanities, and the group of study programmes, namely, religion and theology (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 322 of 13 June 2017 on Classification of Education in Latvia). The code of the programme is accurate and corresponds to the programme parameters.

The volume and duration of the study programme, the course sections and their volume, the compulsory content of studies, the professional qualifications, the principles and procedure of evaluation, as well as the volume and principles of internship comply with the requirements set forth in the National Standard for the Second Level Higher Professional Education (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 512 of 28 August 2014). The selection of courses, the content and volume of courses, as well as the content of internship needed for obtaining the professional qualification are determined in accordance with the professional standards for pastoral counsellor.

The goal of the master's study programme is oriented towards training of new specialists in theology and religion with qualification of a pastoral counsellor, and the programme provides knowledge, skills and competences needed for work in structural units of the Church or hospitals, retirement homes and other institutions, where people need pastoral care. After successful

completion of master's study programme, it is possible to continue studies in the doctorate programme.

Didactic approach of the study programme is based on the goals of the Institute defined by the Education Congregation of the Vatican and it envisages both academic achievements and formation of an individual during the study process. Graduates are able to demonstrate that they are familiar with and understand the research theories and concepts of Catholic theology and religion; they are familiar with modern research methods, are able to independently plan, organise and manage their research and professional activity. The goal of the study programme is specific, namely, to prepare specialists. Majority of study courses are designed to facilitate an understanding of an individual and its path of life based on Catholic theology and anthropology, as well as to ensure formation of skills needed for a pastoral counsellor.

The goal of the study programme is measurable, and it measured through feedback from students and graduates, as well as suggestions expressed by employers. The study programme contains internal quality assurance system with particular attention being paid to analysis of student opinions. Participation of students in assessment of the quality of study process is envisaged in education policy guidelines for creation of single higher education and research area in Europe (ENQA, 2009); even more so, it necessary for implementation of changes in the teaching culture in higher education institutions, which are transitioning from subject-oriented teaching to student-centered approach. In a student-centred study process students are participants of the learning process, as well as interested and active shapers and evaluators of this process.

Admission requirements match the content and structure, as well as the goal and expected learning outcomes of the programme. The Rules on Admission set uniform admission requirements, which ensure that all students can adjust to the study programme to an equal extent. The programme is open to persons who meet the following criteria: 1. Degree of Humanities in religion/theology awarded by the Lateran Pontifical University or its affiliates, or an equivalent higher education qualification from an institution recognised by the Dicastery of Education and Culture of Vatican; 2. At least a first cycle higher education (Bachelor's degree) in the humanities or social sciences and the basic courses of Catholic theology of 24 CP. All applicants must pass an entrance examination. The entrance examination is carried out in the form of individual interview about the motivation for the choice. Learning outcomes defined by the programme can be reached provided there is an appropriate level of previous qualification.

The study programme is delivered in the format of part-time onsite studies; its duration is 2 years and 6 months, and during this period courses with a total volume of 96 credit points are covered. The volume of the study programme enables taking courses in all subfields of the study field. All members of teaching staff have relevant degrees in theology, philosophy, psychology and pedagogy. The volume, structure and content of the study programme are designed for students to acquire knowledge, skills and competences defined in the learning outcomes of the study programme in the utmost quality; they envisage studying of theoretical courses from compulsory and compulsory elective sections, as well as developing competence in writing a research paper. To a great extent, the content and structure of the programme are oriented towards writing a high-quality master's thesis. Thus, duration of the study programme ensures complete achievement of goals and objectives of the programme in the utmost quality.

After completing master's study programme, graduates can join the life-long learning programme offered by RARZI, where they can gain new knowledge, as well as develop research skills and international experience. Professional master's degree in religion and theology enables continuation of studies in doctorate studies programme, provided admission requirements of the specific doctorate programme are fulfilled.



### **3.1.3. Economic and/ or social substantiation of the study programme, analysis of graduates' employment.**

PMSP in religion and theology offers high-level education in humanities with focus on religious studies in modern era and the past.

Religious studies give an insight into the past and present of the humanity, and it develops the most essential skills, such as critical thinking and analytic writing. One of the main skills, which is developed during the study process and is essential in the career of each individual, is the skill of learning (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/324332-par-izglitiba-attistibas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam> (available only in Latvian)). Learning is usually associated with a process of acquiring new knowledge, developing certain skills and shaping or changing attitudes. In other words, the aim of learning is to improve one's competences (knowledge, skills and attitude) in a particular sphere of life. However, learning also has a direct impact on the quality of our daily life and emotional well-being, thus the developed competences is not the only tangible outcome of learning. Studying makes us happier, and it helps us maintain our mental and physical health, which is imperative for a comprehensive development of an individual and individual's active participation in public life.

Graduates of RARZI become pastoral counsellors or chaplains in hospitals, army, crisis and psychological counselling centres, prisons and other social institutions, as well as they become catechists in parishes of the Church, thus providing unique contribution to the development of humanitarian life in Latvia. They can work in areas related to research of religion and analysis of current events and processes (universities, institutes, mass media), in administration (public administration, religious organisations), as well as they can practice in churches and other religious organisations, and teach religious education or work for non-governmental organisations (in fields related to human rights, social work, etc.). The knowledge obtained during studies allows graduates to become teachers, civil servants, business analysts, politicians, social workers, charity workers, journalists, etc.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine highlighted the need to review the European value system. Maybe, the humanitarian and social aspects should be reviewed from another perspective, just like the economic aspects. Collective attempts ensured social stability in Latvia. Knowledge obtained during the studies enabled students of the master's study programme to take part in stabilisation of public mood, maintaining of peace and reliance when expressing views in mass media or online and during personal communication with agitated people. Due to inhomogeneous ethnic composition in Latvia (large number of Russians entered Latvia after the war), Russia's aggression in Ukraine can destabilise social situation and cause social tensions and opposition. Therefore, knowledge about pastoral work and differences among denominations acquired during studies are particularly important. Seeking and finding stabilising elements and common language are among the key skills that are essential during sudden social, humanitarian and economic change. Complete picture of the processes and changes is still unclear because changes are either about to happen or they have just begun. Active practical work of students as mediators on social networks, in parishes and at their places of employment during the period of rising political and social tensions is positive and more frequent.

#### **3.1.3. 1. table**

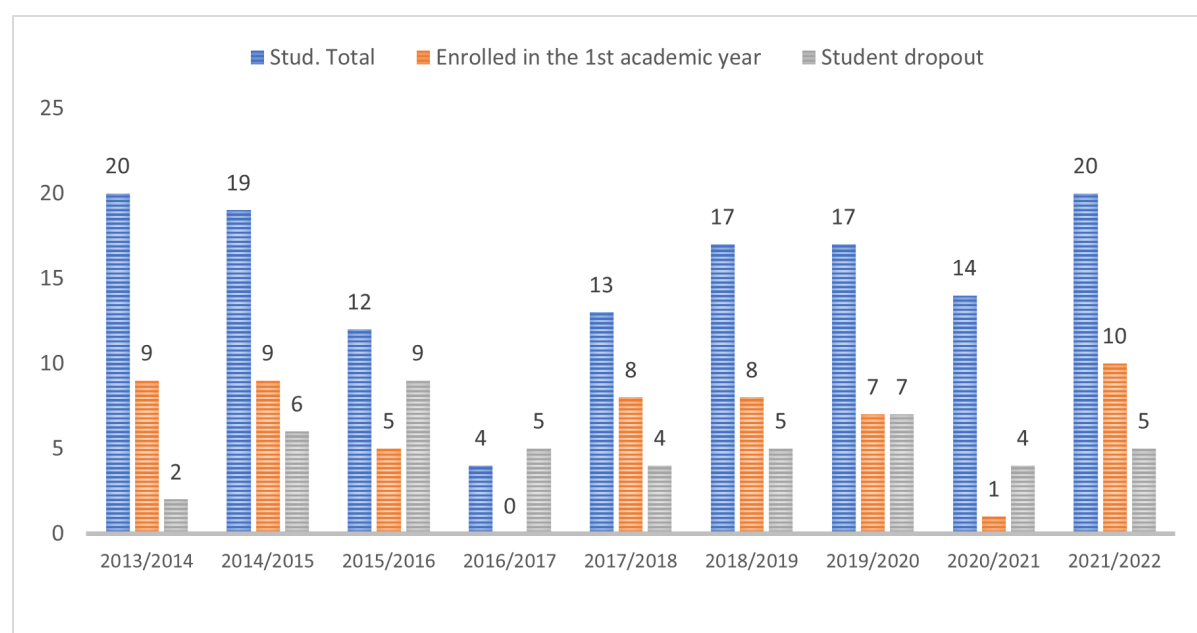
Employment of the Graduates 2019-2022

	Number of Graduates MSP	Information about employment
2021/2022	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher at Jelgava Spīdolas State High school</li> <li>• Driver of emergency bus. /welder/electrician in "Rīgas gaisma". Volunteer in pastoral counselling for people with experience of clinical death.</li> </ul>
2020/2021	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housewife. Volunteers in catechesis for young people in Jelgava.</li> </ul>
2019/2020	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social worker at the Prison Administration Riga Central Prison. Pastoral counsellor working with prison staff and prisoners.</li> <li>• - Dead.</li> </ul>
2018/2019	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RAKUS Hospital , Volunteer in the parish</li> </ul>

Information about the graduate employability was obtained through personal interviews with the graduates.

### 3.1.4. Statistical data on the students of the respective study programme, the dynamics of the number of the students, and the factors affecting the changes to the number of the students. The analysis shall be broken down into different study forms, types, and languages.

The number of students in the PMSP Religion and Theology during the accreditation period varies mostly between 12 and 20, with only 2016/2017 showing a low result due to a change in student accounting principles, a change in premises and an insufficient enrolment campaign.



During the reporting period, the main reason for giving up studies is lack of motivation among all working students to combine studies with work. Regardless of the attempts made by the management of RARZI and the Director of the study programme, one-on-one negotiations and motivational efforts, many students decide to drop out. Surveys show that in general students appreciate the organisation and quality of study process in the master's programme.

Meanwhile the number of graduates is small because of the high number of drop outs and rather high standards set for the study process.

### **3.1.5. Substantiation of the development of the joint study programme and description and evaluation of the choice of partner universities, including information on the development and implementation of the joint study programme (if applicable).**

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

### **3.2.1. Analysis of the content of the study programme. Assessment of the interrelation between the information included in the study courses/ modules, the intended learning outcomes, the set aims and other indicators with the aims of the study course/ module and the aims and intended outcomes of the study programme. Assessment of the relevance of the content of the study courses/ modules and compliance with the needs of the relevant industry, labour market and with the trends in science on how and whether the content of the study courses/ modules is updated in line with the development trends of the relevant industry, labour market, and science.**

The PMSP in religion and theology is devised in line with the requirements set for the master's study programmes by the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Regulations on Study Programmes at RARZI; they are also based on the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 512 of 26 August 2014 on the [National Standard for the Second Level Higher Professional Education](#) (available only in Latvian) and Annex 1 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 322 of 13 June 2017 on Classification of Education in Latvia, which describes the learning outcomes for studies on level 7 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework by taking into account the goals and objectives of the study programme.

The content of the PMSP is developed and planned with account of the above-mentioned economic and social circumstances, it reflects the labour market trends and is developed in close collaboration with representatives of the labour market and the field; meanwhile, it also observes the principle of interrelation and succession of courses, which gives an opportunity to reach the goal of the study programme to the utmost extent. In order to ensure that, eight elements of acquired knowledge, skills and competences have been defined. Specific study courses have been devised and the totality of knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired during each study course has been set in line with the expected learning outcomes of the study programme. Correlation between the goals and learning outcomes of the study programme and the learning

outcomes of specific courses is indicated in description of each study course, which outlines the content and plan of each course, learning requirements and outcomes, as well as references to be used.

The structure, courses and content of the PMSP have been devised in accordance with the current needs of the labour market and development trends in Catholic theology and teaching of the Church.

During the reporting period, changes were made to the goals, objectives and learning outcomes of the BSP and minor changes were made to the content of the PMSP, by taking into account current developments. The content of the study courses was updated to include recent documents of the Catholic Church and papal encyclicals, thus making focus on issues relevant to modern society. Correspondence of changes in the PMSP with the goal, objectives and learning outcomes of the study field is monitored by the management of RARZI; the content of the course is monitored by updating the content, reference materials and other resources, and by applying student-centred learning and teaching methods both in classes and in the process of planning and organisation of independent assignments of students.

PMSP consists of compulsory, compulsory elective and free elective study courses with a total volume of 96 credit points.

PMSP courses are divided into following sections:

compulsory section A – 44 credit points

compulsory elective section B – 4 credit points

free elective section C – 2 credit points

internship – 26 credit points

master's thesis – 20 credit points

The PMSP traditionally has consisted of the following sections of courses: the compulsory section (A), which includes the most essential compulsory courses in the field, such as Pastoral Theology II, Spiritual Theology II, Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation, Pastoral Aspects of Dogmatics, Pastoral Aspects of Moral Theology, Pastoral Anthropology and Social Ethics, Personality Theories in Pastoral Work, Physiology and Psychosomatics, Modern Languages/Italian Language, Theological Method, Research Methods in Pastoral Work, Information Technologies in Pastoral Work, Developmental Psychology, Catechesis, Clinical Psychology, Pastoral Psychology, Psychology of Religion and Social Psychology. It also includes compulsory elective section (B1 or B2), which contains diverse courses in the field, as well as free elective section (C). Significant element of the studies is the master's thesis. The study programme also envisages internship at the parish, internship in pastoral work, internship in chaplain's work and internship in research.

Courses in the master's study programme are divided between compulsory and elective courses. They are arranged to ensure that compulsory courses cover theology and religious studies; these courses are comprehensive, and they are foundation for further specialisation (elective) courses.

Courses included in the master's study programme provide in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge in theology, philosophy and psychology, and they develop independent learning skills of students as well as offer an opportunity to learn professional competences needed for pastoral counsellor. Master's studies *inter alia* contains such courses as Pastoral Theology, Biblical Theology, Clinical Psychology, Psychology of Religion and Pastoral Aspects of Moral Theology. The programme focuses on development of individual research interests and skills, which are later demonstrated in writing of master's thesis. The programme puts emphasis on scientific research conducted by

students in the area of practical psychology – catechesis, pastoral counselling and spiritual care.

The study courses are coordinated and comply with the objectives of the study programme, and they creating a study environment that develops independent learning skills of a student and student's critical thinking in theology and religious sciences. The plan and content of studies have been compared to those offered by other leading higher education institutions in Europe, which offer similar programmes, and they have been recognised as competitive. Furthermore, the study content is regularly updated (on the grounds of employer and student surveys) to match the development trends in society; that increases competitiveness of students in the labour market even more.

Description of study courses and final examinations are of high-quality and comply with the regulatory enactments; study content is topical and mutually complimentary, it meets the goals of the programme, enables achievement of learning outcomes and meets the needs of the study area and scientific trends. Overview on learning outcomes included in the description of study courses attests that courses cover the entire set of knowledge, skills and competences envisaged by the study programme. Information about the compliance of learning outcomes of all study courses included in the study programme is contained in the attachment on course mapping.

Student surveys, as well as opinions and suggestions expressed by students are also important tool in improvement of study courses. Cooperation and exchange of ideas with employers on recent developments in practical work is a significant impetus for updating study courses

Methods used in implementation, including evaluation, of studies facilitate achievement of goals and learning outcomes of the study course and the study programme; principles of student-centered learning are taken into account. Quality of studies is improved by taking into account surveys of students, employers and graduates. Students take advantage of incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities; courses acquired during mobility are recognised.

As a follow-up to studies in research and acquisition of practical professional knowledge in religion and theology offered by the bachelor's study programme, the master's programme ensures that students are able to do the following:

- conduct in-depth research in subfields of theology and religion;
- explain the results of their research;
- represent theology and religious sciences in interdisciplinary academic dialogues and researches;
- address problems related to pastoral care in diverse institutions and groups based on theories and methodologies in humanities and social sciences
- offer spiritual care and pastoral counselling to individuals, families and groups by working in a multiprofessional and multidisciplinary team and by being aware of the advantages and boundaries of the profession.

**3.2.2. In the case of master's and doctoral study programmes, specify and provide the justification as to whether the degrees are awarded in view of the developments and findings in the field of science or artistic creation. In the case of a doctoral study programme, provide a description of the main research roadmaps and the impact of the study programme on research and other education levels (if applicable).**

Opportunities offered by the PMSP (large diversity of courses) allow students to successfully take

part in scientific conferences in Latvia and internationally (in Lithuania, Estonia and elsewhere). Students of master's study programme are actively involved in teaching as they assist to professors in certain lectures or give lectures for bachelor's students. Students of master's study programme acquire scientific experience in pedagogy by reviewing term papers or bachelor's thesis. Experience gained in the framework of the programme allows a large part of graduates to successfully and actively participate in the life of the Church and various projects organised by parishes. Large part of master's students use the acquired knowledge in theology-related terminology when translating spiritual writings.

The programme allows acquiring in-depth knowledge, practical skills and competences in the field of theology and religious studies. The content of courses and methodologies are developed in line with modern trends and are based on practical activity (involvement of teaching staff and students in real-life professional activity). The study programme puts great emphasis on independent assignments and discussions on topics covered; that facilitates formation of critical thinking, as well as development of research competences.

The PMSP is delivered by members of teaching staff, who have doctorate or master's degree in theology or related sciences.

**3.2.3. Assessment of the study programme including the study course/ module implementation methods by indicating what the methods are, and how they contribute to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study courses and the aims of the study programme. In the case of a joint study programme, or in case the study programme is implemented in a foreign language or in the form of distance learning, describe in detail the methods used to deliver such a study programme. Provide an explanation of how the student-centred principles are taken into account in the implementation of the study process.**

Methods used in implementation, including evaluation, of studies contribute to achievement of course and programme goals and learning outcomes, and they take into account the requirements of student-centred teaching and learning.

The study programme is implemented in a format of part-time onsite studies, with lectures and classes held on Friday evenings and Saturdays. Principles of student-centred education are taken into account in the study process.

- Student representatives are members of the Council of RARZI and are taking part in meetings; they are welcome to express their views and their opinions on all relevant issues are taken into account. RARZI administration holds regular meetings with student groups.
- The study programme is implemented in a manner that supports and inspires students. Small-sized study groups enable individual approach; lectures and classes are interactive due to modern technology. The academic staff has a high level of education and is motivated to apply innovative learning and teaching methods and to regularly update the content of courses.
- RARZI supports student mobility and recognises study courses taken during mobility by coordinating this process with the Faculty. If possible, recognition and equivalence of courses taken in other study programmes is ensured.

Student-centred approach is taken into account when updating the content of study courses, and

particular attention is paid to meaningful formulation of learning outcomes, which subsequently facilitates a dialogue between teaching staff and students on study content, as well as format of studies and methods used in study organisation. Properly formulated learning outcomes, in turn, improve understanding of students and increase their sense of ownership over their own learning process, self-evaluation and understanding of evaluation.

Oral, written and combined methods of study and evaluation are used during studies, in interim tests and in final examinations. Teaching staff predominantly uses methods that encourage active participation and reflection of students. A variety of methods are used to acquire and consolidate knowledge, including lectures, seminars, individual and group assignments, discussions, etc. Methods, which focus on activity of students, are predominant as they facilitate achievement of learning outcomes, namely, acquisition and consolidation of knowledge and skills and development of competences.

Classes, lectures and seminars encourage students to engage in dialogue and discussions; group assignments are also used. Teaching staff encourages students to ask questions, provides clarifications, and, if needed, helps students with finding additional resources.

Independent assignments are particularly important in the part-time onsite format of studies. Independent assignments are carefully planned and widely used. Types of independent assignments are diverse and their choice is based on the goal, content and expected learning outcomes of each particular course. Students write essays and papers, as well as prepare oral reports and presentations.

In the study process, teaching staff uses methods, tests and evaluation criteria that match the goal of the course and expected learning outcome. During the study process, students receive support and feedback from teaching staff; and, in the beginning of each course, members of teaching staff inform students about the requirements, independent assignments and criteria set for successful completion of the course. Evaluation criteria are made public in advance. Evaluation reveals the extent to which students have achieved the expected learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are evaluated on the grounds of criteria set forth in regulatory enactments: the amount and quality of knowledge acquired, skills acquired, competence acquired in line with expected learning outcomes.

Both formative and summative evaluations are used. Formative evaluation takes place during the entire study process and involves control questions asked during contact hours and discussions on independent assignments taken during the study process.

Summative evaluation (a test or exam) takes place at the end of each study course. Summative evaluation tests may be executed as written tests (taken on paper or electronically) or oral discussions. Several summative evaluations may be executed in courses that last longer than one academic year.

In the end of studies, students choose topics of interest and, in collaboration with a supervising tutor of their choice, draft and defend master's theses. The volume of master's thesis and main requirements are determined by the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran University. Master's thesis demonstrates the ability of a student to link theoretical knowledge with research by applying appropriate methodology. Master's thesis synthesises knowledge acquired in theology, psychology, pedagogy and other courses, and conclusions are further studied in part of empirical research. It analyses specific situations in pastoral care by assessing hypothesis and looking for answers on the research question. Thus students demonstrate both their ability to solve problems related to pastoral care in various institutions and diverse groups, by grounding their conclusions on theories and methods of humanities and social sciences, and their ability to offer spiritual care and pastoral counselling to individuals, families and groups.

After the state emergency was declared in March 2020, organisation of the study process was changed significantly, namely, studies were organised remotely. During the Covid-19 pandemic, lectures and classes were held remotely by using Google Meet and other online tools available to RARZI. While in practice it was proved that face-to-face interaction is an essential part of the study process, it was concluded that e-learning platform is also necessary. Such a platform is being developed and is expected to be introduced as of academic year 2023/2024.

Learning outcomes are evaluated on the grounds of criteria set forth in regulatory enactments: the amount and quality of knowledge acquired, skills acquired, competence acquired in line with expected learning outcomes.

**3.2.4. If the study programme envisages an internship, describe the internship opportunities offered to students, provision and work organization, including whether the higher education institution/ college helps students to find an internship place. If the study programme is implemented in a foreign language, provide information on how internship opportunities are provided in a foreign language, including for foreign students. To provide analysis and evaluation of the connection of the tasks set for students during the internship included in the study programme with the learning outcomes of the study programme (if applicable).**

Internship envisaged by the study programme systematically guides students to acquiring skills and competences defined in the expected learning outcomes and professional standard. Internship is a mandatory part of the study programme, and it is implemented in accordance with the professional standard of pastoral counsellor. Internship for obtaining professional qualification is ensured by making an agreement with a place of internship on the grounds of contract signed by RARZI and the relevant institution of the Church, state or municipality or non-governmental organisation. The Study Department of RARZI helps students find places of internship by taking into account their place of residence and other personal aspects, if possible.

The goal of the internship is to learn skills and competences needed by pastoral counsellor and to get prepared for research.

During internship, students develop pastoral counselling skills by working with clients one-on-one or by working with couples, families and various groups of people; this way, students learn and develop ability to independently organise studies and research, and to use professional terminology.

Students learn the skills of catechist by observing and taking part in catechesis in parishes of the Church and by applying knowledge and skills to analyse and explain fundamental ideas of Catholic theology acquired during studies.

Students learn skills needed by chaplain for work in state and non-governmental organisations and institutions. Among these skills are the skill to create and maintain a safe environment for work with children, youths and people with special needs. Students cooperate with representatives of diverse cultures, religions, professions and Christian denominations. They gather experience for research, develop their skills of applying research methodology, data analysis and presentation; thus, they develop ability to independently facilitate further development of skills, and ability to take responsibility for one's own and team's professional results,

During internship, students demonstrate their ability to responsibly and confidently use IT solutions



in compliance with personal data and private information protection requirements.

During internship, students are provided with supervision necessary for fulfilling tasks of internship; their motivation to continue studies and to work as pastoral counsellors is strengthened.

Internship is scheduled in line with the PMSP plans, and it takes place during each semester. This allows students to get acquainted with the work of a pastoral counsellor in diverse spheres and at various institutions in a logical sequence. Internship consists of 4 parts: during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester, students have a opportunity to have internship in catechesis (6 credit points); during the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, students have internship in pastoral work with the engaged and families (8 credit points); during the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester, students have internship in chaplain's work (8 credit points) 4<sup>rd</sup> semester, students have internship in research (4 credit points) This internship gives students insight into tasks and challenges of chaplains in hospitals, prisons, the National Armed Forces of the Republic of Latvia or institutions of social care); during the 4<sup>th</sup> semester, students have internship in research (6 credit points).

During internship, students learn how to address problems related to pastoral care in diverse institutions and groups based on theories and methodologies in humanities and social sciences acquired during studies. They are able to offer spiritual care and pastoral counselling to individuals, families and groups by working in a multiprofessional and multidisciplinary team and by being aware of the advantages and boundaries of the profession.

### **3.2.5. Evaluation and description of the promotion opportunities and the promotion process provided to the students of the doctoral study programme (if applicable).**

### **3.2.6. Analysis and assessment of the topics of the final theses of the students, their relevance in the respective field, including the labour market, and the marks of the final theses.**

Work on the topic of master's thesis is full of determination and gradual. Goal of master's thesis is to conduct an in-depth study in one of the subfields of theology or religious sciences. Choice of the topic depends on the relevance of the topic in the field and labour market, as well as personal interest of a student. Thesis is developed in close collaboration with the supervising tutor and, if necessary, by involving other members of teaching staff of RARZI in the capacity of consultants. As the study plan envisages writing of research papers in nearly all study courses, students have a wide range of available topics; besides, after choosing a topic, student can gradually develop it into an interdisciplinary research.

During the reporting period, at the end of master's study programme students have defended theses with the following topics:

Eucharist – Source of Love, Faith and Unity in the Pastoral Service to Families

Development of Social Pastoral Care in the Parish on the basis of encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* by Pope Benedict XVI

Neighbourly Love as an Expression of God's Love in Pastoral Work with Prisoners Sentenced to Life

Imprisonment

Example of the Tragedy in Zolītūde in a Five-Day Coverage in Portal Delfi

Ignatian Spirituality in the Spiritual Growth of the Christian and Practical Aspects in Practicing

Professional Work of a Chaplain in the Interaction between Palliative Care Patient, Doctor and Relatives

Relics as Testimonies of the Saints: Catechesis on Veneration of Relics

Relationship of Human and God the Creator as the Foundation for the Meaning of Life: Support Opportunities in Pastoral Counselling

Opportunities for Development of Pastoral Counselling Profession in Latvia: Background, Experience and Perspectives

Fostering the Trust in God in Bible Classes for Adults at the Parish

Roots of Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Old Testament and In-depth Explanation of It in Adult Catechesis

Youth Evangelisation and Religious Conversion in Pastoral Companionship

Anthropological Aspects of Maternal Mercy in the Identity of a Women in the Context of Wound Caused by Abortion

Use of Near-Death Experience Phenomenon in Pastoral Work

Understanding of Human Sexuality in Theology of the Body by John Paul II and Its Integration in Pastoral Work with Adolescents

Capacity of Self-Transcendence of Women and Its Role in Pastoral Counselling

Recommendations for Pastoral Work in the Context of the State of Emergency caused by the Pandemic: Experience of Job

Spiritual Companionship after Dissolution of Marriage and Divorce Based on Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis

Matter of Human Happiness in the Debate about the New Global Ethics: Opportunities Offered by Pastoral Care

Experience of Loneliness by a Human in the Context of Filial Mercy and as an Existential-Psychological Phenomenon: Possibilities to Use Pastoral Care

Issue of Euthanasia in the Face of the Mystery of Life and Death

Opportunities for Pastoral Ministry in Children's Palliative Care in Latvia

Medium as a Pastoral Counsellor for a Person in Crisis

Solutions to Fertility Issues in Latvia: Challenges of Moral Aspects in Pastoral Counselling

The range of topics chosen for master's thesis reflects the multifaceted research interests in pastoral counselling. Master's theses are written about diverse aspects of catechesis (for example, *Relics as Testimonies of the Saints: Catechesis on Veneration of Relics*; *Roots of Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Old Testament and In-depth Explanation of It in Adult Catechesis*), issues related to marriage and family (for example, *Anthropological Aspects of Maternal Mercy in the Identity of a Women in the Context of Wound Caused by Abortion*; *Spiritual Companionship after Dissolution of Marriage and Divorce Based on Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis), existential

issues (for example, *Matter of Human Happiness in the Debate about the New Global Ethics: Opportunities Offered by Pastoral Care; Issue of Euthanasia in the Face of the Mystery of Life and Death*). Topics chosen for master's thesis reflect issues that are topical to the society (for example, *Example of the Tragedy in Zolitūde in a Five-Day Coverage in Portal Delfi; Medium as a Pastoral Counsellor for a Person in Crisis*).

The choice of topic for master's thesis is determined by student's interest in a subject, which is then studied from the perspective of teaching of the Catholic Church by taking into account the experience gathered during studies and personal life.

Master's theses are presented to the commission, which evaluate in detail the scientific and methodological contribution of the research. Each member of the commission individually evaluates the quality of work and grades it. Opinion of the reviewer is particularly essential. The final grade is determined in a discussion within the commission by taking into account evaluation made by each member of the commission. During the reporting period, final grades ranged from 5 to 10, with the best grade given to 7 students.

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

**3.3.1. Assessment of the compliance of the resources and provision (study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision) with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the learning outcomes to be achieved by providing the respective examples.**

Resources and support available to the PMSP are sufficient for programme implementation. The programme is implemented in rooms fitted for lectures and classes, which are located in the complex of buildings at Katoļu iela 16/18. Rooms are equipped with modern technical solutions needed for the use of information technologies. As indicated in Section 3 of Part 2, infrastructure is used jointly with the Riga Institute of Theology and the Inter-diocesan Theological Seminary.

Study and research facilities meet the needs of the PMSP. Students have access to a comfortable and well-equipped study environment in all premises of the Institute, namely, between lectures or at any other time students have access to environment which enables them to study also outside the library. There is Wi-Fi internet connection, power sockets, etc.

Financial resources necessary for implementation of the programme are ensured within the framework of the study field. Funding of the programme, as well as funding of the study field, consists of funds provided by the Catholic Church of Latvia, funds provided by foreign Catholic foundations and tuition fees paid by students.

**3.3.2. Assessment of the study provision and scientific base support, including the resources provided within the framework of cooperation with other science institutes and higher education institutions (applicable to doctoral study programmes) (if applicable).**

**3.3.3. Indicate data on the available funding for the corresponding study programme, its funding sources and their use for the development of the study programme. Provide information on the costs per one student within this study programme, indicating the items included in the cost calculation and the percentage distribution of funding between the specified items. The minimum number of students in the study programme in order to ensure the profitability of the study programme (indicating separately the information on each language, type and form of the study programme implementation).**

The funds needed to finance the PMSP come in roughly equal shares from the following sources:

1. Latvian Bishops' Conference funds;
2. Funds from foreign Catholic foundations (e.g. the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Pope Foundation; the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops);
3. Tuition fees paid by students. (For example, PMSP students payed 960 Euro per year for the academic year 2022/2023)

Cost effectiveness in the years 2017-2022 :

2017 - 0,1

2018 - 0,15

2019 - 0,56

2020 - 0,5

2021 - 0,15

2022 - 0,12

The prime cost of the PMSP per student in the academic year 2021/2022 was EUR 4282.56. In determining the prime cost, expenses for maintenance, heating and electricity are not taken into account. For the programme to be cost-effective, there have to be 12-15 students each academic year (a total of 24-30 students in the programme).

Specific projects are being carried out to develop the PMSP, funded by German Catholic foundations (Renovabis, Bonifatiuswerk, Kirche in Not). These funds are used for research and for the development of the BSP: the development and validation of new courses of study, support for scientific research, funding for conferences, symposia, continuing education events, the development of teaching and methodological materials, the translation and publication of Church documents. These sources of funding are stable, operate in the long term (throughout the lifetime of RARZI) and contribute to financial stability.

## **3.4. Teaching Staff**

**3.4.1. Assessment of the compliance of the qualification of the teaching staff members (academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants) involved in the implementation of the study programme with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments. Provide information on how the qualification of the teaching staff members contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes.**

Qualifications of teaching staff involved in implementation of the study programme comply with the requirements set for implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in regulatory enactments; qualifications of teaching staff are also appropriate for ensuring achievement of goals and learning outcomes of the study programme and relevant study courses. All members of teaching staff, who are involved in study programme as permanent teaching staff or visiting teaching staff, have at least a master's degree in a related study field; all members of teaching staff, who are involved in the programme, are professionals in their field and are specialised in the respective study course. The study field and study programmes are implemented by highly-qualified and highly-skilled teaching staff.

Due to the specific nature of the programme and the small number of students, in addition to the permanent members of teaching staff elected by RARZI, visiting teaching staff is also involved in the implementation of the programme. Qualifications of teaching staff comply with the requirements set for implementation of the programme and the requirements set forth in regulatory enactments. as well as certifies the relevance of the qualifications of the participating teaching staff to the achievement of the goals and tasks of the study program.

A total of 18 members of teaching staff are involved in implementation of the programme. Seven (38.8%) of them are elected by RARZI, the rest are visiting or guest teaching staff. Of the permanent elected members of teaching staff, 5 (71.4%) are professors and associate professors, 6 (85%) hold a doctorate degree in theology (2), philosophy (2), pedagogy (1) and psychology (1). Other members of teaching staff hold master's degree or a licentiate degree. Four members of the visiting teaching staff hold a doctorate degree in theology, and most of them are professors at the Riga Institute of Theology.

All involved teaching staff have versatile knowledge and skills in both academic, scientific and practical fields, including cooperation with church and support institutions, which provides the opportunity for students to go on study tours during their studies. The qualification of the teaching staff is also confirmed by their active participation in the academic and scientific work of other higher education institutions, as well as the performance of various institutional duties, not only at RARZI, but also at the international level.

**3.4.2. Analysis and assessment of the changes to the composition of the teaching staff over the reporting period and their impact on the study quality.**

Composition of teaching staff has been relatively stable with only minor changes during the reporting period. Changes in the composition of the teaching staff are mostly related to generational change, studies for doctorate degrees or appointments (nominations) to other

positions needed to the Church.

In the period since 2013, professor who taught Biblical Theology and Interpretation of Bible died. RARZI invited a visiting professor to continue teaching these courses, as there are few specialists in Latvia who can teach such courses in Catholic doctrine. The invited visiting professor holds a doctorate degree in theology and has sufficient teaching experience.

Due to the nomination for other duties and closing of the Catechetical Centre, a member of teaching staff with doctorate degree in theology, who taught a course in Catechesis, stopped lecturing at RARZI. Now these courses are taught by a lecturer holding a master's degree and having longstanding experience in catechesis. This lecturer also supervises internship related to catechesis in parishes. That helps linking theory with practical work at the Church.

As a result of new professionals joining the teaching staff, there have been minor changes in the ranks of internship supervisors. For example, Daina Žurilo supervises internship in chaplain's work and internship in pastoral work with families and the engaged.

The above-mentioned changes, as well as the arrival of new professionals at RARZI and their involvement in the study process, have not reduced the quality of studies and it remains at a consistently high level.

**3.4.3. Information on the number of the scientific publications of the academic staff members, involved in the implementation of doctoral study programme, as published during the reporting period by listing the most significant publications published in Scopus or WoS CC indexed journals. As for the social sciences, humanitarian sciences, and the science of art, the scientific publications published in ERIH+ indexed journals or peer-reviewed monographs may be additionally specified. Information on the teaching staff included in the database of experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the relevant field of science (total number, name of the lecturer, field of science in which the teaching staff has the status of an expert and expiration date of the Latvian Council of Science expert) (if applicable).**

**3.4.4. Information on the participation of the academic staff, involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme, in scientific projects as project managers or prime contractors/ subproject managers/ leading researchers by specifying the name of the relevant project, as well as the source and the amount of the funding. Provide information on the reporting period (if applicable).**

**3.4.5. Assessment of the cooperation between the teaching staff members by specifying the mechanisms used to promote the cooperation and ensure the interrelation between the study programme and study courses/ modules. Specify also the proportion of the number of the students and the teaching staff within the study programme (at the moment of the submission of the Self-Assessment Report).**

Cooperation among members of teaching staff is encouraged and ensured for different study courses. This prevents overlapping of course contents, as well as facilitates planning of independent assignments and research activities of students.

Cooperation among members of teaching staff is facilitated by the group of professors, which defines the goals and objectives of the Development Strategy. In accordance with the academic development objectives of RARZI and the requirements set by the Study Department, there is mutual observation of classes, as well as joint discussions on issues topical to Catholic education during continuing education courses and seminars.

Cooperation among members of teaching staff is facilitated by organising regular meetings of teaching staff and scientific conferences, as well as by joint participation in recollections and fellowship events.

If students make suggestions during the discussion with the Director of the study programme or RARZI management and these suggestions are related to teaching of a particular course, a member of teaching staff, who teaches the course, is informed, students' comments are evaluated and ways to improve the course are sought. Regular exchange of information, mutual understanding and explanatory work held among all stakeholders have had a significant impact on the content of studies.

Significant changes in cooperation among members of teaching staff have taken place since introduction of remote learning introduced due to Covid-19 pandemic. The most notable changes can be observed in patterns of behaviour, for example, rapid adaptation of lecture proceedings, adaptation of study materials to ensure their suitability for the study format, adaptation to technologies. As a result of student initiative, during this period, teaching staff has been recording lectures and improving study materials. Collegiality in practical delivering of lectures has also been important during this period. Situations, where members of teaching staff had to adapt to a hybrid format of lectures and practical assignments, were the most challenging. In general, adaptability of teaching staff is considered as very high. Whenever there was a need to improve processes, appropriate measures were taken in a dialogue between teaching staff, students, the Director of the study programme and the Director of RARZI.

There are several levels of cooperation realised within the framework of the study programme; and they enrich the study process and promote a diverse exchange of knowledge.

The student-teaching staff ratio at the time of submission of the self-assessment report is 1:1 (30 members of teaching staff and 32 students).

# Annexes

III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme		
Sample of the diploma and its supplement to be issued for completing the study programme	P26_Diploma_Msp.zip	P26_Diploms_Msp.zip
For academic study programmes - Opinion of the Council of Higher Education in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)		
Compliance of the joint study programme with the provisions of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (table) (if applicable)		
Statistics on the students in the reporting period	P27_Statistical data on students at the MSP.docx	P27_Statistikas dati par studējošajiem_MSP.docx
III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof		
Compliance with the study programme with the State Education Standard	P_28_Compliance with the study programme with the State Education Standard PMSP.docx	P_28_atbilstība standartam PMSP.docx
Compliance of the qualification to be acquired upon completion of the study programme with the professional standard or the requirements for professional qualification (if applicable)	P29_Compliance of the PMSP with the professional standard2.docx	P29_PMSP atbilstība profesijas standartam1.docx
Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework applicable to the relevant field (if applicable)		
Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme	P30_Mapping of the study courses.docx	P30_Studiju kursu kartējums.docx
The curriculum of the study programme (for each type and form of the implementation of the study programme)	31_pielikums_study plan_MSP_EN.docx	P31_studiju plans_MSP .docx
Descriptions of the study courses/ modules	P32_Descriptions_of_study_courses MSP_EN.zip	P32_Kursa apraksti MSP_LV.zip
Description of the organisation of the internship of the students (if applicable)	P33_Regulations_Professional_Qualification_InternshipPMSP_en.docx	P33_RARZI-prakses-nolikums-PMSP_2.docx
III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.4. Teaching Staff		
Confirmation that the academic staff of the doctoral study programme includes not less than five doctors, of which at least three are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the branch or sub-branch of science in which the study programme intends to award a scientific degree (if applicable)		
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 (if applicable)		