

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: College of Law

Study field: Law

Experts:

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## **Summary Assessment of the Study Field**

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Within the study direction Law the College of Law implements one study programme – Law. The Study Programme can be studied part-time, full-time, or in distance learning format, the studies are organized in Riga and in four Branches: Gulbene, Liepāja, Valmiera and Ventspils.

The Experts have identified that the College has a system for ensuring continuous improvement, development and efficient performance for the Study Direction and is sufficiently implementing their internal Quality Assurance System. The management of the study direction is supporting the development of the study direction. Decision-taking is efficient. The college has adopted necessary regulations and implemented procedures for organizing the studies, these procedures are logical and efficient. There is also a feedback system, which takes into account the feedback of students, staff members and other stakeholders. The feedback is used for the improvement of the study process.

The College has a stable financial situation and all studies are fee based. There is appropriate infrastructure and the material and technical provision required for the implementation of the study direction.

The College enjoys a certain academic position at the national level due to long tradition. It has developed mechanisms to promote the involvement of the staff and students in scientific research. The level of scientific research is compliant with the Study Direction.

The College does have a number of partner institutions from Latvia and abroad, but there doesn't appear to be a proper strategy of strategic partnership. The procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad are in place, but they are not always used in the most efficient way. The system of enabling the internship places to the students is in place and efficient.

The Experts have found that the College has implemented the recommendations made by the accreditation Experts in their report of 3 March 2012

### **1. Management of the Study Field**

#### **Analysis**

1.1. Within the study direction Law the College of Law implements one study programme – Law. According to the study programme the aim of the programme is within two years to educate and train theoretically knowledgeable and practically capable specialists for national economy and law enforcement institutions. On the website the College of Law states that over the period of two years, students are provided with a sufficiently wide and comprehensive knowledge in the discipline of law to be put to practice in the capacity of a lawyer's assistant or any other occupation requiring application of laws and other regulatory enactments. It also says that this programme is an important first step on the way to a career as a barrister, judge, or a legal adviser. In the development strategy of the legal studies programme of the College of Law for 2018-2023, one of the development goals and priorities is to develop the study process as part of lifelong learning, taking into account the previously acquired knowledge and experience of the students, as well as forecasting future developments in the labour market. So, in the development plan for the College, there is the goal of developing this programme as part of lifelong learning, but in the marketing and public materials this argument is not widely used. Instead, the programme is advertised as granting

the possibility of becoming a legal assistant after graduation. In reality very few, if any of the graduates work as 'legal assistants' (if that term is narrowly defined, at any rate). On the other hand, most of the graduates of the programme have gained added value from the legal knowledge they obtained in completing the programme and have, as a result, advanced their careers with their current employers. More emphasis should be placed on that perspective in advertising the programme.

1.2. The College is managed by the Council and the Director. There is also a Deputy Director in Study Work and a Deputy Director in Administrative Work. The study programme is headed by the Director of the Study Programme, whose direct responsibility is to manage the Study Programme. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the governance structure of the College was conducted in July 2019 and the governance structure is considered functionally efficient, with opportunities to improve individual activities in the field of marketing. The College has four Branches: in Gulbene, Liepāja, Valmiera and Ventspils. In the majority experts' opinion the work in the Branches is organized efficiently as most of the activities are coordinated from Riga. Each Branch has locally only one employee working at the Branch where studies take place. All the other activities are coordinated centrally, which is more cost effective and guarantees the minimum standards of these activities.

1.3. The admission regulations of the College are in place and published on the website of the College. The regulations are logical and efficient and contribute to fulfilling the aims of the study direction. The procedures for the evaluation of the achievements and learning outcomes of the students are also in place and clearly defined. The College has also adopted the rules for recognizing professional experience, and the previously acquired formal and non-formal education. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, the former education of 29 students was recognised last academic year. Prior to that, there was a group of employees of the Registry Departments with long-term work and professional experience and in this case their work experience was recognized as an internship.

1.4. Academic integrity controls and anti-plagiarism regulations are in place. The College has signed the agreement with the University of Latvia and joined the Single Computerised Plagiarism Control System (SCPCS). Academic integrity issues and the necessity to prevent academic fraud is an important and growing topic across the academic world. But, despite the fact that the relevant regulation had been adopted, the Experts were not able to gain a clear understanding of the activities of the College to prevent academic fraud. The laconic statement in the Self-Assessment Report that so far there have been no cases of academic honesty violation and plagiarism at the College did not reassure the Experts but rather indicated the depth of the problem. It is common that the students and academic staff all over the world violate the rules of scientific ethics, in most cases due to ignorance and lack of relevant competence. If the students of the College do not violate the academic rules at all, that would be an exceptional case in the whole academic world. It is much more likely that the cases are not brought to light due to insufficient acknowledgement of academic integrity issues. The College needs to focus on enhancing the competence of the academic staff and students in the field of academic integrity, first starting with acknowledgement of the issue and its complexity. It would also be relevant to get acquainted to the best academic integrity practices in foreign top-level higher educational institutions.

1.5. There is information published on the website of the College at [www.jk.lv](http://www.jk.lv) regarding the Study Direction 'Law', and the relevant Study Programme. This information is in Latvian, English and Russian. The Experts have no reason to conclude that the information published on the website does not comply with the information available in the official registers. On the whole the website of the College is very informative and clearly structured and gives a good overview of the activities of the College. There is also an impressive amount of English materials on the website.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The structure of the management of the study direction and the relevant study programmes is supporting the development of the study direction. Decision-taking is efficient. The support provided by the administrative and technical staff contributes to meeting the needs with regard to the relevant study programme of the study direction. The college has established a system and implemented procedures for the admission of students, the recognition of the study period, professional experience, and the previously acquired formal and non-formal education, as well as for the evaluation of the achievements and learning outcomes of the students, and these procedures are logical and efficient. The information published on the website of the college regarding the relevant study programmes of the study direction complies with the information available in the official registers.

Strengths:

1. The study programme provides a good opportunity for life-long learning.
2. The work in the Branches is organized efficiently.
3. Necessary regulations are in place and being followed.
4. The website is informative and clearly structured.

Weaknesses:

1. The perspectives for the graduates and the outcomes of the studies as stated in the public documents do not take into consideration the real situation and the real intentions of the students to the utmost (the study programme as an important part of lifelong learning).
2. The academic integrity and plagiarism issues are not addressed thoroughly enough.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. The College has an established Quality Policy (<http://jk.lv/kvalitatespolitika.pdf>), and a Quality Management Handbook (<http://jk.lv/dokumenti/KVS.pdf>), both of which are publicly available. Additionally, in 2019, the College received an ISO 9001:2015 certificate for the development and implementation of its Short-Cycle Programmes. The Quality Policy establishes the main strategic goals and principles according to which the College is maintaining its internal quality assurance. The Handbook describes the processes of the internal quality system. To enhance the management and quality assurance, in year 2018, the College received funding from the European Social Fund for Specific Aid, Objective 8.2.3, 'Ensure Better Governance in Higher Education Institutions', for a project entitled 'Development and Evaluation of Management System, Improvement of Competence and Skills of Management Personnel in Compliance with the Standard of Excellence in Management'. All of these processes contribute to the achievement of the aims by structuring how the study process should be organized and evaluated. They ensure continuous development of the study direction and the study programme within it.

2.2. Each year the Director of the Study Programme, in cooperation with the Study Programme's Quality Assessment Commission, has to develop a Self-Assessment Report to specify its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for development. To ensure the development and review of the Study Programmes, twice a year anonymous feedback surveys are sent out to students where they can rate their overall satisfaction with the study process and make suggestions or complaints. Otherwise, students are welcome to file a complaint with the administration of the College electronically by a survey or in person. The issue is then reviewed and, if necessary, resolved. Even though in the self-assessment report it was mentioned that students can express their opinion on

the content, quality, course of studies, material and technical provision of the study courses and evaluate the work of a particular lecturer, in one of the meetings with students, the Experts were told that students only can assess their study process overall. It may seem that there is a miscommunication that should be solved. The graduates and employers are surveyed once a year. Employers are also involved in the Council of the College and in development of specific study courses. Surveys are reviewed in the meeting of the Council of the College, the general meeting of the lecturers, and the staff operational meeting.

2.3. The College collects and analyses statistics every year regarding the number of students enrolled, the number of 'expatriates', and the number of permitted academic leave to understand the reasons for leaving (either inability to pay study fees or other reasons) and to try and improve the study process accordingly. In Experts opinion, the College collects and analyses the data properly.

2.4. The College has integrated the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG in its Quality Management System and has put in place measures to improve the standards and performance of Study Programmes in specific processes as described in the aforementioned Quality Management Handbook. However, the College did not acknowledge or identify the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG, which require special attention.

### **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The College has publicly available Quality Assurance Policy and a Quality Assurance Handbook which describes the processes and revision of the quality in the College and study process. There is a yearly Self-Assessment Report of every Study Programme which specifies its strengths and weaknesses and opportunities for development. All stakeholders are included in the feedback system, surveys are available for employers, graduates and students, and the results are later analysed. The College analyses statistics necessary for the improvement of the study process and has integrated the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG in the quality management system. It should be made sure that all students have the access to in-depth, detailed feedback surveys.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The College has a determined quality assurance policy and handbook to ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction and the relevant study programmes.
2. The feedback system is available and easily understandable for all the stakeholders.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. There seems to be a miscommunication about student surveys - documents say that these surveys have in-depth questions about study process, but some of the students said that they can only rate overall study process.
2. Even though the College has acknowledged the implementation of the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG, they have not identified which standards require special attention.

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

#### **Analysis**

3.1. The College is a private institution so the studies are only fee based. The study fee has not changed in the previous few years. It is 1344 EUR per year for day-time students, 1308 EUR per year for evening-time students, 1248 EUR per year for part-time students in Riga and e-learning, and

1056 EUR per year for part-time students in Branches. The College states that cost-per-student is 1314 EUR per year, so the study fee covers most of that. The biggest part of the College's expenses (65,8%) are salaries and taxes. The College also has additional revenue from other education services (for example, courses and seminars), and revenue from EU Structural Funds projects. There is a yearly evaluation of the resources for the study direction. Scientific research is supported financially by the College. There is a chance for academic staff to publish their scientific articles for free in a collection of scientific articles published by the College. Academic staff can also fill in an application to get finances for going to present their research in international conferences. In addition, the College hosts two conferences every year in which the participation of academic staff is free. In Experts opinion, also based on the conversations with the academic staff, this system is working effectively and sufficiently.

3.2. The College has a human resource development plan to attract teaching staff. Most of the academic and administrative positions are announced publicly, but some elections happen internally and these vacancies are not open to the public, which is a risk in transparent management and attracting the best professionals also from outside the College. The scientific requirements are for teaching staff to engage in research and to participate in a conference once every three years. The College funds courses and conferences for academic staff to improve their professional qualifications. The College has obtained funding from Specific Aid Objective 8.2.2, 'To Strengthen Academic Staff of Higher Education Institutions in Strategic Specialisation Areas', of the European Social Fund project, in the project 'Development of Competences and Skills of the Academic Staff of College of Law Ltd.'. Within that, there have been two foreign lecturers and two PhD students employed. Also, there are English courses available for Latvian teaching staff. Since 2014 there have been 26 staff members who have participated in outgoing mobility (only seven of them were academic staff) and the College has welcomed 52 incoming colleagues through mobility programmes. In Expert's opinion there should be more academic staff going on mobility to gain international experience and implement in College's operation. The number of incoming mobility and guest lecturers for the College is very positive.

3.3. To deliver its teaching, the College is leasing parts of public schools both in Riga and in Branches. For students and teaching staff, the College has made available projectors and screens, special interactive boards, printers, laminating machines, portable computers, cameras and recorders, audio and video equipment, and voice recorders. Students can use the portable computers both in designated areas and in the library. The College operates with the accounting and record keeping programmes 'Zalktis', and 'Tildes Jumis'. All of the technical support is provided from Riga.

To improve and manage efficiently the purchasing of learning materials, technical and methodological material, and information software, a procurement plan is facilitated every year. The library is equipped with 25 thousand volumes of books. The College has its own publishing house. Overall, the College is subscribing to 18 different periodicals. All of the available databases are open access and students can use them from their personal computers. The only subscribed databases are Latvian (Leta.lv, Nozare.lv) and available only from library computers. The Library is open every day from 8:00 - 18:00 during workdays and also open on Saturdays, so all of the students are available to check out their necessary books before or after the lectures. The Experts found that some of the books and workbooks in the library are outdated and can be used only as historical materials, for example: Stucka A. "Introduction to Administrative Law and Administrative Procedure Law" -Riga: College of Law, 2003. For e-learning students, most of the materials are scanned and available online. Video lectures are also available as learning materials. The e-learning environment is accessible for students and there is a user manual available for using the e-learning portal and technical support can be reached if necessary. Students in branches have most of the necessary

books delivered to them, but they can place a request to have additional materials sent to them from Riga.

3.4. Regarding the support system necessary for the students, the College, in cooperation with Riga State Technical College, offers the possibility to use a gym once a week free of charge, and the opportunity to use the dormitory of Riga Building College. Student's who are studying through e-learning have a support system for their studies. They have a possibility to attend face to face lectures if they can manage that and they can attend consultations every three months. For the students who can't attend lectures and consultations face to face, they have the possibility to reach lectures via online calls and emails. The support for online learning for the e-learning students is available during e-mails, calls and user manual available on the online learning platform. Students in branches can request necessary books from Riga, if needed and can ask help from lecturers and branch management. In Experts' opinion, this support system is sufficient.

### **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The College has a stable financial situation and all studies are fee based. There is a system for financing scientific research and professional development.

The College has appropriate infrastructure and the material and technical provision required for the implementation of the study direction and all the resources are available for staff and students, except some of the books that are outdated.

There is a policy for attracting highly qualified teaching staff, but not all of the vacancies are open to the public.

A well-established support system is in place for both physical activities and possibilities to use the dormitory, also the e-learning students and students in branches have the possibility to reach staff for support for their studies.

Strengths:

1. Academic staff get financial support for scientific research and professional development.
2. The College has a strong support system in place for full time, part time and e-learning students.

Weaknesses:

1. Some of the books in the library are outdated and can be used only as historical material, but the College is buying new books (both physical and e-books) yearly to keep the library and the resources up to date.
2. Not all of the vacancies are open to the public but are filled from within the College personnel

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

### **Analysis**

4.1. The processes around scientific research complies with the Study Direction, the aims of the College, and the development level of scientific research. The academic staff's potential and College support is enough to carry out scientific activities. By concluding an employment contract with the academic staff members, the job description includes an obligatory requirement that at least every three years there must be a research activity, i.e., publications participation in scientific conferences, etc. This is also confirmed by the College's long-standing practice of organizing annual conferences, issuing publications, regular reviews of lecturers' scientific activities and the requirements and support system set up by the College, for instance, providing to publish articles in college publications, to present findings at college conferences, establishing international cooperation with foreign higher education institutions.

A clear and strict regulatory framework and enforcement mechanism have been established for scientific work. Scientific research activities are regulated by the Regulations on Scientific Research. Additionally, the academic staff's job description includes an obligatory requirement that at least every three years there must be a research activity, i.e., publications, participation in scientific conferences, etc. It is positive that mechanisms have been developed to encourage the involvement of academic staff in scientific research.

4.2. The relation between scientific research and the study process has been defined and ensured, and it is efficient. The results of research carried out by the academic staff (monographs, publications, etc.), are continually applied in the study process. The course descriptions show that the scholarly research of the College dominates in the list of literature. The College has developed mechanisms to encourage the involvement of students in scientific research. During the first study semester, students are given several lectures on the methodology of scientific research. Scientific research is linked to the study process defined by 'Methodological Guidelines for the Development and Defence of Qualification Papers and Reports'. The participation of students in scientific work is achieved through qualification papers, which are then publicly defended, and the best papers are recommended for publication in the collection of scientific articles and they are then presented in the International Science Week. In view of the number of credit points devoted to the development of the Qualification Paper, it is reasonable to believe that the development of Paper could sometimes lead to publishable scientific research.

4.3. International cooperation in the field of scientific research is ensured and improved in a target-oriented manner. International cooperation in scientific research is also ongoing. Until May 2019 the College has organised nine International Scientific Conferences. Conferences are organised in cooperation with foreign partners (Mykolas Romeris University, Utena College (Lithuania) etc) (see self-evaluation report, p.44). However, the overall level of internationalization is still modest. The academic staff presence at conferences or workshops with high impact is limited. The College could develop international co-operation with a wider range of foreign higher education institutions, develop more purposeful and effective co-operation in research, for instance by attracting funding from the European Commission or other donors for research, joint research projects, joint publications in internationally recognized journals, guest lectures.

4.4. The College has developed mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research. A platform has been set up in which academic staff share their research results. The results of the research activities of lecturers are published at international conferences within the framework of International Science Week and at the conferences of the College. Conference materials (reports, theses) are also published once a year in conference proceedings. Every two years, the Scientific Articles of the College are elaborated and published.

It is positive that the Council of the College has approved the topics of the research papers for each lecturer according to the study course delivered at the College. For instance, lecturer Eduards Bruno Deksnis has research area (topic) "Human rights of the European Union", lecturer Tālav Jundzis – "Continuity of the Latvian statehood in the context of Constitution and international law". At the same time, the Experts call for an assessment of how topics coincide with the study courses. For instance, the topic on legal aid and state-provided legal aid is for a lecturer who provides the course 'Administrative procedure law'. The relation of the research topic to the study course is not direct. Hence, this makes it difficult to achieve the goal that the lecturer regularly introduces the students to the results of the research.

The College has presented the results of its scientific performance. The self-evaluation report was accompanied by a review of each lecturer's scientific activity in recent years. Books and other publications published by the college were also presented to the experts. The Experts welcome



them positively.

The College enjoys a certain academic position at the national level due to long tradition, especially in the field of Mediation. At the same time, attention shall be paid to a number of possible improvements. Firstly, in some cases, scientific articles are outside the six-year academic cycle. Secondly, it is important for academic staff to publish more of their research results outside of the College's books and magazines. It is important that a wider range of scientists, students and other stakeholders can get acquainted with the scientific activity of college lecturers, publications are more accessible, they can be quoted, and college lecturers are involved in a wider scientific discussion. Thirdly, academic staff should participate more in other Latvian and international conferences in order to have a more intensive scientific discussion with a wide range of scientists. In this way they would be accessible to a wider audience and a wider discussion would take place.

4.5. The college has developed mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research. They are well-functioning and efficient. The lecturers introduce the students to the results of the research and often the students themselves are involved in the research topics of the lecturers. The broadest and deepest research is carried out in the second year of study, by developing qualification papers, which are then publicly defended and the best papers are recommended for publication in the collection of scientific articles.

A platform has been set up in which students share their research results. The results of the research activities of students as well as graduates are published at international conferences within the framework of International Science Week and at the conferences of the College. Conference materials (reports, theses) are also published once a year in conference proceedings. Every two years, the Scientific Articles of the College are elaborated and published.

4.6. The college tries to focus on innovative solutions. Various technical improvements are made within the product innovation, the material and technical facilities are improved, new software is purchased.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The processes around scientific research complies with the study direction. The academic staff's potential and College support is enough to carry out scientific activities[11] . The College enjoys a certain academic position at the national level due to long tradition. The relation between scientific research and the study process has been ensured. The college has developed mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research. As well as the College has developed mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and international cooperation in the field of scientific research is ensured but there is room for improvement. The academic staff presence at conferences or workshops with high impact is limited.

### **Strengths:**

1. The College has a clear and strict regulatory framework and enforcement mechanism for scientific work.
2. The results of scientific research are integrated in the College's study courses.
3. The College's students are involved in scientific research.
4. The College enjoys a certain academic position at the national level.
5. The College has a platform in which academic staff and students share their research results.

### **Weaknesses:**

1. The College academic staff rarely publish outside of the College's own books and magazines.
2. The College's academic staff's presence at conferences or workshops with high impact is limited.

## 5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

### Analysis

5.1. There is a list of 17 foreign and seven Latvian higher education institutions, with whom the College has signed an agreement of cooperation in exchange of students, lecturers and scientific research. The foreign partner institutions are from the following countries: Georgia 5, Turkey 4, Lithuania 2, Kazakhstan 1, Switzerland 1, England 1, Bulgaria 1, Malta 1, Ukraine 1. On the whole it can be said that the choice of the partners is relevant in that sense that the majority of them are either specialized in Economics and Law or at least have study programmes in these fields. However, using the internet, it was not possible to track down any trace of the following partners: (i) Community College Uhachapuridze, Georgia; and (ii) Bublloeko Ltd, Bulgaria. Furthermore, the English partner, Bchoard Limited, which was incorporated as a private limited company on 8 September, 2015, has since been dissolved. The status of ABMS University from Switzerland is also not clear. And, besides that, the overall policy of choosing strategic partners was unclear and gave the impression that choosing partners had been random and chaotic. Also, in the Self-Assessment Report, it was not explained what was the aim of choosing partners mainly from Georgia and Turkey, instead of looking for strong strategic partners from other EU countries. Nor was it clear how cooperation with these particular partners contributed to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the Study Direction 'Law'. The selection of the partnering higher education institutions does not comply with the aims and the specific features of the study direction and the strategy of the College. The College needs to reconsider its policy of choosing strategic partners starting from defining the development goals that the College aims to fulfil with the help of the partnership with other institutions.

5.2. The procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad are in place. Some members of the College's academic and administrative staff have used the possibilities of Erasmus+ mobility. According to the Self-Assessment Report, there have been five guest lecturers in the College in the study direction of 'Law' this academic year, and 11 lecturers in the academic year 2018/2019. During the site visits, the students and alumni of the College spoke highly of the guest lectures, although they admitted there were only a few of them during their studies. There also appears to be even less guest lectures available for the students in the Branches than to the students in Riga.

5.3. The College has agreements of cooperation in provision of internships with 14 private companies. It is noteworthy, though, that during the site visit and five different meetings with the employers and providers of internship places to the College students, we met none of the representatives of these companies, but almost exclusively the representatives of public institutions as potential employers. At the same time, it is credible that, as the majority of the students of the College have already former vocational or higher education and work experience, they find the internship places within their present employer and can contribute their newly-gained legal knowledge there. The Experts are confident that the system of enabling the internship places to the students is in place and efficient.

5.4. The College has not developed any joint Study Programmes with other higher education institutions. The College has also not managed to use the full potential that their existing partners have. For instance, the Global College Malta has a very similar strategy of the College to provide high-level education to professionals and the ones who already have obtained vocational or higher education. It could be valuable to the College to create a strong partnership with the other higher education institutions who have succeeded with this mission to share best practices. The opportunities of the ERASMUS+ student mobility programme are also underexploited. Only five

Turkish students have come to the College and they could not be involved in the existing study process as there are no English lectures offered to the local students. None of the College students has used the possibilities to go to study abroad. The College should establish the system of counselling to the students with the view of encouraging them to use the opportunities of outgoing mobility, to help them to choose the best suited institutions, programmes and courses etc.

### **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The selection of the partnering higher education institutions does not comply with the aims of the study direction and the strategy of the College. The College needs to reconsider its policy of choosing strategic partners. The procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad are in place, but there could be more possibilities to do site-visits and attend guest lectures given by the practitioners. The system of enabling the internship places to the students is in place and efficient. The counselling system to the students to encourage them to use the opportunities of outgoing mobility would be useful.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The College's academic and administrative staff have used the possibilities of Erasmus+ mobility.
2. Guest lectures on the topics of interest to the students are carried out.
3. The possibilities of internships are flexible and support the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the Study Direction.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. The policy of choosing strategic partners does not support the fulfilment of the College's strategy and does not contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the Study Direction.
2. Students are not encouraged to use ERASMUS+ possibilities for international mobility.
3. The students of the Branches of the College are disadvantaged compared to the students studying in Riga in regard to extracurricular activities, guest lectures and opportunities of internationalization.

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

### **Analysis**

6.1. Pursuant to the Self-evaluation Report, previous accreditation of the Study Programme took place in 2013 and, as a result of that, the Study Programme was accredited for six years. The accreditation Experts made several recommendations in their report of 3 March 2012, and specifically:

- (i). To enrich the library stock with books in foreign languages.
- (ii). To include the study course "Second Foreign Language" in the study programme.
- (iii). To strengthen international cooperation.
- (iv). To strengthen cooperation with the graduates.
- (v). To supplement the modules Part C of the study programme.

In the College's opinion, practically all recommendations had been already implemented by the College. This was proved by submitting its letter No. 3-20/5 dated 15 January 2013 to the Higher Education Council, which included 'a list of performances' (p.55 of the Self-Evaluation Report).

It is pointed out in the Self-Evaluation Report, that the College's aim is to ensure that books in foreign languages are available for each study course (p.35). However, there is no legal text book or manual in a foreign language mentioned as a new acquisition in the Library fund in the Self-

Evaluation Report (p.35) or in the list of textbooks (p.36-37), and only three publications of conference materials are in English (p.37-38).

During the Experts' visit to the library of College in Riga, some legal manuals in foreign languages were present on the shelves and the Head of the Library explained that many more of them are available in PDF format on the College's database used by both academic staff and students. Also, she explained that students are actively using legal manuals in foreign languages in other libraries of other Higher Education Institutions which have been made available for them in accordance with cooperation agreements, for example, with the Riga Law School and the University of Latvia. Review of some graduation papers confirmed usage of legal manuals and textbooks in foreign languages by the students.

Students and graduates of the College said to the Experts that there was sufficient availability of legal manuals and textbooks in foreign languages during meetings we had with them in Riga and in the College's Branches.

The description of study courses in the Self-Evaluation Report Part A, General Subjects, includes the course 'Professional terminology in foreign languages', 2 credit points. The aim of this course is to provide to students with knowledge of legal communication, both oral and written in a foreign language. Part C, Optional Study Models, includes the course European Law in English.

According to the Self-Evaluation Report, the College is member of international organizations such as the UN's Organization Principles for Responsible Management Education (since 2013); the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics (since 2014); the European Association of Institution in Higher Education (since 2012); and the International Real Estate Federation (since 2014). The College has actively been involved in the Erasmus + programme since 2013.

The Experts met Erasmus + programme foreign students. Two students from Turkey, Erzincan University, had been studying from six months to one year within the framework of Erasmus + programme. There was also one student from Kashmir.

It can be seen from the Self-Evaluation Report, that the College has signed more than a dozen co-operation agreements with foreign HEIs, such as Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania), University of Nevsehir (Turkey), SBA Business Academy (Georgia), Utena University of Applied Sciences (Lithuania). (Note, however, the negative comments on some of these partnerships and the College's use of the Erasmus + programme made by the Experts in section 5 above.)

This allows the academic and administrative staff members of the College to be actively involved in Erasmus+ study and traineeship mobility. Thus, in the 2018/2019 academic year, outgoing mobility consisted of seven persons (including two lecturers); in 2017/2018 academic year 10 persons (including three lecturers); in the 2016/2017 academic year three persons; in the 2015/2016 academic year six persons (including two lecturers); and in 2014/2015 academic year five persons (including two lecturers).

Within the framework of Erasmus+ study and traineeship mobility, the incoming mobility has been implemented every year: in the 2017/2018 academic year, incoming mobility was eight persons; in the 2016/2017 academic year seven persons; and in the 2015/2016 academic year five academic and administrative staff members.

Within the Erasmus+ project 'TrustGLP', where the College is one of the project partners, in 2018 there were 12 lecturers who participated in the incoming mobility; and in 2017 14 lecturers.

The incoming mobility foreign lecturers in the Law Programme were from Lithuania, Turkey, Poland, Spain and Romania: in the 2018/2019 academic year 11 lecturers; in the 2017/2018, academic year eight lecturers; in the 2016/2017 academic year seven lecturers; and in the 2015/2016 academic year five lecturers.

The recommendation on strengthening cooperation with graduates was implemented by the College in 2013 by setting up the database of graduates and by establishing the College's alumni entity – the Graduate Council. Graduates periodically receive an electronic questionnaire from the management of College to fill in. The purpose of the questionnaire is to receive feedback on the

quality of the Study Programme and suggestions to improve it. Graduates are active in the study process by giving lectures as visiting lecturers, as well as offering the internship placements for the students. Graduates are involved in the conferences organized by the College and in social events such as bowling tournaments.

New modules were included in Part C of the Study Programme since 2013 – European Law in English, Personal Data Protection, Coaching, Criminal Law and Mediation. The Mediation module is the most popular among students. The modules of Part C of the Study Programme are optional, the recommendations of students, graduates, and the Employers' Advisory Council have been taken into account in selection of subject matters of these modules, as well as actual developments in legislation.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Based on the above, the Experts have found that the College has implemented the recommendations made by the accreditation Experts in their report of 3 March 2012.

Strengths:

1. The strength is the ability of the management of the College to make changes in the study programme reacting to the recent developments in legislation and the employers' needs, which was also achieved to large extent due to the efficient and rather quick implementation of the experts recommendations made in 2012.

Weaknesses:

1. Not sufficient implementation of recommendation in respect of improving the foreign language skills of the students and the academic staff.  
2. More legal manuals and textbooks in foreign languages would be advisable to have on the Library shelves.

## **7. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field**

1 Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The College implements a well-versed internal Quality Assurance System that ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the Study Direction. (Part 2 of the Report)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The College has publicly available both a Quality policy and a Quality Management Handbook for Quality Assurance procedures. (Part 2 of the Report)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** There is a system for developing and reassessing the Study Programmes yearly. (Part 2 of the Report)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The criteria for evaluating students' results is developed and made public to students. (Part 2.2. of the Self-Evaluation Report)

- 5 1.4. Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** There is a system for assessment of and professional development for academic staff. (Part 2 of the Report)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The College collects and analyses staff's, graduates', and students' information and data for further development as well as makes a financial report. (Part 2 of the Report)

- 7 1.6. The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The College implements a well-versed internal Quality Assurance System that ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the Study Direction. (Part 2 of the Report)

- 8 R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The College cooperates with different organisations, but it is unclear whether it ensures the achievement of the aims of the Study direction. (Part 5 of the Report)

- 9 R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Directions of scientific research comply with the study direction, the aims of the College and the development level of scientific research. The academic staff's potential and College support is sufficient to carry out scientific activities. (Part 4 of the Report)

- 10 R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The College has eliminated all of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the Study Direction, with the exception of improving the foreign language skills of students and academic staff and the respective shortage of books and manuals in foreign languages. (Part 6 of the Report)

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

To improve the quality of study direction, The College should acknowledge and identify the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG, which require special attention and develop a plan to improve the identified aspects.

## Long-term recommendations

The Experts recommend that the College of Law takes a more active role in exploring possibilities for teaching staff to systematically engage in high-level research activities outside the College.

The study courses need more diversity to meet the main aim of studies which is to educate and train state and private sector specialists who are conversant with fundamental legal principles and who are able to apply appropriate legal norms. This could be achieved by including such courses as Corporate Law and International Business Transactions.

The feedback system to students' should include more specific questions about each study course and lecturer.

The College should reassess, review, and update its collection of books to keep them up to date.

## II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME "Law Science"

### II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME "Law Science"

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The Study Programme is called 'Law Science' and leads to the qualification of 'Legal assistant'. It can be studied part-time, full-time, or in distance learning format. Virtually all parts of the programme are taught in Latvian. Approximately 50% of all students study part-time (see p.5 of the Self-Evaluation Report). The admissions requirement is that students have had a 'Secondary Education'. These are interrelated with the objectives and learning outcomes of the Study Programme which are that the students should:

- (i) understand basic legal principles, legal rhetoric, and the importance of logic in law;
- (ii) know basic principles of accounting and economics and the related legal framework;
- (iii) understand the nature and importance of the history of law, the nature, content and application of the main areas of law, and the nature and importance of the European Union and international law, including in the context of Latvia;
- (iv) understand issues related to legal ethics and communication, procedural issues and their application, and have knowledge of legal document analysis and text writing;
- (v) can orientate in legal matters, check compliance with procedure, draw up legal documents, and organize record keeping;
- (vi) are able to carry out an analysis of the relevance of facts and draw legal conclusions;
- (vii) Are able to argue for legal conclusions, find the applicable law, draw up documents, check the conformity of documents, and use computer programmes necessary for carrying out legal work, in particular legal material databases;
- (viii) Are able to master the official and foreign language.

Almost three-quarters of the students are female and the average age is 35 to 39. The Study Programme is compliant with the provisions that are set out in the Latvian Law on Institutions of Higher Education. It also complies with other related Latvian Laws and Regulations.

The aim of the Study Programme is to 'educate and train theoretically knowledgeable and practically capable specialists for the national economy and law enforcement institutions, emphasising the specifics of Latvia as a member of the European Union'. This is broadly delivered. The title of the programme ('Law', code: 41380) correlates with the learning outcomes set for the programme and

the title is related to the various applicable Regulatory provisions in Latvian Law.

When taught full-time mode, the duration of the Study Programme is two years two months; in part-time and distance learning formats, it lasts two years five months.

A high number of students 'exmatriculate' from their studies without completing their Diploma or the corresponding qualification as a 'Legal Assistant'. The main reasons for this attrition are: failing to pay fees; moving abroad; changing abode; pressures on time as a result of work or family commitments; and experiencing a change of heart about whether it is the right course for them.

### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The title of the Study Programme is compliant with the Regulatory Provisions in Latvian Law and the name of the study programme, the professional qualification to be acquired, and the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated.

Strengths:

1. The name of the Study Programme and the Professional Qualification it provides are interrelated with the aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admissions requirements for the Study Programme.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. The Study Programme has been developed in accordance with Latvian Education Law. The qualification it provides ('Legal Assistant') is in accordance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 264 (dated 23 May, 2017).

The Study Programme consists of 88 credit points, which is consistent with the length of the Programme. The 88 credits in the Study Programme are made up as follows: the Qualification Paper is weighted at eight credit points; the Internship is weighted at 16 credit points; 20 credits are provided for general education courses; and 44 credits for 'field-specific' courses (including three credits for an 'elective study course'). The study process in the Branches is identical to that in Riga.

The Study Programme provides Level 5 EQF qualifications which employers want. The programme also offers modules in legal specialisms which are not available elsewhere. There was a suggestion that it would be helpful for the College of Law to introduce a new specialist module in Police Law. Employers said they were particularly pleased that many former officials of high standing in Latvia were teaching students on the Study Programme.

The local employers all spoke highly of the Study Programme. They regard it as an important vehicle for delivering the sorts of skills they are looking for in new employees. If it were not there, there would be a significant gap in the labour market. Employers particularly valued the Internships students took and were able to employ students immediately after they graduated from the College of Law. To be able to draw on graduates from the College of Law who have a good knowledge of legal principles and legal thinking and can apply legal norms to practical situations in the administration or delivery of front-line services is a highly valued skill.

There were 121 'Qualification Papers' written by students in 2016. They covered a broad range of topics. The College of Law will need to continuously review the standards of these papers to ensure



that their quality is maintained.

2.2. The delivery of the Study Programme is by lectures, seminars, and practical classes. Students are asked to study independently under the supervision of their classroom teachers. Self-learning is an important part of the programme. The delivery methods are appropriate for the learning outcomes set by the Study Programme. These Learning outcomes are most readily achieved through a sensible balance between taught sessions and self-learning/directed study outside the classroom which the Study Programme achieves.

The procedures for student assessment are based on internal regulations. The procedure for the 'State Examination' is regulated by the State Examination (Qualification Examination) Regulation. At the conclusion of the internship, the student submits an internship report which is then evaluated.

Student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into account in the design of the study process which is co-developed in partnership with the students through the various feedback mechanisms the College has put in place, such as the comprehensive biannual Student survey which is discussed in section 2.3 below..

2.3. The Study Programme is regularly reviewed by the College of Law to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the Latvian labour market. Based on advances in the relevant field of science, the review of the Study Programme takes account of the opinions expressed by students, graduates, employers, and those who host the internships.

A comprehensive Student Survey takes place twice a year. Students are asked, amongst things, to evaluate how their lecturers encourage discussion and stimulate interest. Lecturers are rated on a five-point scale: 'excellent'; 'good'; 'satisfactory'; and 'poor'. Most ratings are 'excellent', 'good', or 'satisfactory'. The results are discussed with the students. The College of Law also runs an Employer Survey. Around 92% of the respondents indicated that they are 'fully satisfied' with the professional competencies of the graduates of the College of Law.

2.4 Some students at the College do avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, and the learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognised. But Criterion 2.4 is only partially met, as the College of Law has only up to 10 students and staff participating in outward mobility a year .This issue is discussed further in the Chapter on Cooperation and Internationalisation.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The descriptions of the study course and the final thesis comply with the provisions set out in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and conforms to the aims of the Study Programme. The Learning Outcomes are appropriate and achieved. The course meets the needs of the relevant industry.

The evaluation methods and the study implementation methods contribute appropriately to the aims and learning outcomes of both the Study Programme and its component courses. Student-centred learning and principles of sound pedagogy are taken into account.

The outcomes of surveys conducted among students, employers and graduates are used to improve the quality of delivery of the Study Programme and its component courses.

Some students are availing themselves of incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities. The College of Law is involved in Erasmus+ and up to 10 students and staff participate in outward mobility a year. The College of Law's involvement with Erasmus dates back to 2013.

Strengths:

1. The Study Programme provides its graduates with valuable educational opportunities to study while continuing to work and at fee levels that are affordable for them.

Weaknesses:

1. A weakness is that only a limited number of students on the Study Programme are able to take advantage of outward mobility opportunities.

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

#### **Analysis**

3.1. During the visit experts made sure that the study provision, infrastructure and technical support, informative provision is adequate in the College for the study programme. For study purposes, the College is leasing parts of public schools in Riga and in Branches. For students and teaching staff, the College has made available projectors and screens, special interactive boards, printers, laminating machines, portable computers, cameras and recorders, audio and video equipment, and voice recorders.

The financial provision for the study programme is 1344 EUR per year for day-time students, 1308 EUR per year for evening-time students, 1248 EUR per year for part-time students in Riga and e-learning, and 1056 EUR per year for part-time students in Branches. The College states that cost-per-student is 1314 EUR per year, so the study fee covers most of that. The College also has additional revenue from other education services (for example, courses and seminars), and revenue from EU Structural Funds projects.

For scientific research the College reimburses national and foreign conferences for the academic staff. Academic staff can also publish their scientific articles for free in a collection published by the College. College hosts scientific conferences twice a year for academic staff to participate for free. In Experts's opinion, also based on the conversations with the academic staff, this system is working effectively and sufficiently.

The College is subscribing to 18 different periodicals and databases. All but two of the databases are open access. The Library is open every day from 8:00 - 18:00 during workdays and also open on Saturdays, so all of the students are available to check out their necessary books before or after the lectures. The Experts found that some of the books and workbooks in the library are outdated and can be used only as historical materials, for example: Stucka A. "Introduction to Administrative Law and Administrative Procedure Law" -Riga: College of Law, 2003.

For e-learning students, most of the materials are scanned and available online. Video lectures are also available as learning materials. The e-learning environment is accessible for students and there is a user manual available for using the e-learning portal and technical support can be reached if necessary. Students in branches have most of the necessary books delivered to them, but they can place a request to have additional materials sent to them from Riga.

3.2. Not applicable

#### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

In the College the study provision, scientific support is adequate, the academic staff has the possibility to attend conferences and they can reimburse their expenses from the College.,

Informative provision is very wide and accessible, only some of the materials are outdated and can only be used as historic references. Material and technical provision are good for the implementation of the study programme. Financial conditions for the study programme are stable and being revisited yearly. The College creates the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes, and indicates the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process also in the future.

Strengths:

1. The academic staff get financial support for scientific research;
2. The material and technical provisions are in a very good condition

Weaknesses:

1. Despite the fact that the College is buying new informational resources, both physical books and e-books yearly, some of the books in the library are outdated and can only be used for historical references.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

4.1. Staff development is managed by the College of Law and it arranges two conferences a year for staff which are designed to support their skills enhancement. The College has in place measures to fill vacancies in a targeted way to avoid the negative effects on the quality of the implementation of its Study Programme (and compliance with regulatory enactments) that might arise from changes in the composition of its teaching staff. Criterion 4.1 is thus met.

4.2. The academic staff employed by the College of Law, including visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants, are in conformity with the provisions set out in Latvian Law and in associated Regulations. They are recruited and employed in accordance with the College's Regulation on Academic and Administrative Positions. The Self-Evaluation Report states that 17% of staff have Doctorates and 83% have Master's degrees (see Chapter 1). This meets the criteria.

The Law programme has about 20 core academic staff, as well as visitors. Most academic staff teach both in Riga and the Branches. Some staff teach for other institutions. Only a small number speak English.

Vacancies may be filled following an open or a closed competition. Lectureships are open to candidates who have either a Master's or a Doctoral degree or those who have at least five years of practical experience which corresponds to the course they will deliver. The Director of the Study Programme has both a PhD and a M. iur.

Academic staff are elected by a secret ballot at the College's Council and their appointment is for a period of six years. The role of an academic member of staff is to deliver lectures, workshops, and practical classes, and to administer tests, check reports and assignments, organise tutorial materials, review qualification papers, and perform other academic duties related to the teaching of students.

Teaching is provided for students during the day, in the evenings, and on Saturdays. The demands on staff teaching in the Branches, where teaching is scheduled on Saturdays, are considerable. Many staff are expected to teach through from 9.00 am in the morning at Saturdays only finishing at 5.00 pm. Occasionally, two members of staff share the Saturday teaching.

All the teaching staff, whether responsible for teaching the Study Programme in Riga or in one of the Branches in Liepāja, Ventspils, Gulbene, or Valmiera, are hired by the College of Law.

As the Self-Evaluation Report notes (see p.5), the staff used in the Branches are in the majority of cases the same staff who teach in Riga, although local practitioners and lecturers are also used as

well as guest lecturers. The academic staff we met clearly valued the work done in Branches and at our meeting said that they would like to see the College of Law open more Branches, particularly in Eastern Latvia. Teaching staff in the Branches who are based in Riga are, in some cases (but not all, despite what is said in the Self-Evaluation Report), driven to lectures at the Branches and back home by the College of Law's own driver.

#### 4.3. Not applicable

4.4 Criterion 4.4 is not met: There was no evidence that any of the academic staff were involved in scientific research in fields related to the Study Programme at international level or that the information obtained was universally used in the study process. To improve in this regard, and to produce research of international rather than merely national standing, staff of the College will need to publish in English (not Latvian) and ensure that these publications appear in high-quality refereed journals of recognised international standing.

4.5. During the site visit, the College provided the experts with confirmation that staff appraisals are conducted regularly (twice a year with one-to-one meetings with line managers) and that staff also meet collectively. Criterion 4.5 is met.

### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The College of Law undertakes measures in a target-oriented manner to avoid negative effects on the quality of the implementation of the Study Programme arising from changes in the composition of the teaching staff.

The qualifications of the teaching staff meet the requirements of the Study Programme and of the Regulatory enactments. These qualifications are sufficient to allow for the aims and learning outcomes of the Study programme to be achieved.

There was no evidence that any of the academic staff were involved in scientific research in fields related to the Study Programme at international level or that the information obtained was universally used in the study process. To improve in this regard, and to produce research of international rather than merely national standing, staff of the College will need to publish in English (not Latvian) and ensure that these publications appear in high-quality refereed journals of recognised international standing.

There is a mechanism in place to allow for collaboration between teaching staff to ensure the improvement of the modules in the Study Programme.

#### Strengths:

1. It is a strength that many of the staff have experience of practice in fields relevant to the Study Programme that they are able to bring to bear in their teaching of the students. There will be pressures on staff teaching in the Branches due to the length of the teaching period.

#### Weaknesses:

1. It is a weakness that none of the academic staff is involved in scientific research in fields related to the Study Programme at international level.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Law Science"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Article 11 of Law on Education which provides that the students after completion of their studies of a particular level shall be issued a relevant education document: a certificate, a document attesting to the education, or a diploma.

A State-recognised education document shall be issued to the student who has acquired education in conformity with an accredited educational programme. The sample of the College's Diploma complies with the requirements of Governmental Regulations Nr.202 on Issuance of State Recognized Documents of Higher Education dated 16 April 2013 and Annex 2 thereto.

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The College has a respective agreement with Business HEI Turība and Riga Stradiņa University (Annex 29 to the Self-evaluation Report). Consequently, the requirement set forth by the Paragraph 8 of Article 55 of the Law on HEIs has been complied with.

3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 26 of the Self-Evaluation Report, Clause 4, Paragraph 6, Article 8 of the Law on HEIs has been met.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 25 of the Self-Evaluation Report as evidence of compliance with the requirement of the Paragraph 3 of Article 56 of the Law on HEIs.

Sample Study Agreement attached as Annex 31 to the Self-Evaluation Report complies with the requirements of the Governmental Regulation Nr. 70 dated 23 January 2007 On the Mandatory Provisions to Be Included in the Study Agreement 7.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 27 of the Self-Evaluation report, Provision 1, Paragraph 2 of Article 5, Paragraph 2 of Article 26, Provision 2, Paragraph 5 of Article 55-2 and Paragraph 10 of Article 55-3 of the Law on HEIs. However, this requirement only applies to the study courses taught in English

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Sample Study Agreement attached as Annex 31 to the Self-Evaluation Report complies with the requirements of the Governmental Regulation Nr. 70 dated 23 January 2007 On the Mandatory Provisions to Be Included in the Study Agreement.

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The descriptions of the study courses must be periodically updated with the newest legal manuals and legal texts to be used for studies as mandatory and recommended literature. Subparagraph 3 of Paragraph 2 of the Article 56-1 of the Law on HEIs provides that the descriptions of courses must include the course calendar.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 18 of the Self-Evaluation Report, the Governmental Regulation Nr. 264 dated 23 May 2017 On Classification of Occupations, the Basic Tasks Appropriate to the Occupation and the Basic Qualification Requirements, which sets forth the requirements for legal assistant - occupational code 341102.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 19 of the Self-Evaluation Report, the Governmental Regulations Nr. 141 dated 30 March 2001 On the Standard of First Level of State Professional Higher Education.

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:** N/A

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 12 of the Self-Evaluation Report, Provision 1, Paragraph 2 of Article 5, Paragraph 2 of Article 26, Paragraph 2 of Article 27, Provision 2, Paragraph 5 of Article 55-2 and Paragraph 10 of Article 55-3 of the Law on HEIs.

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The related requirements for the Study Programme have been met. There are no deficiencies which cannot be eliminated within the accreditation term.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

1 R6 - The compliance of the 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 ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 12 of the Self-Evaluation Report, Provision 1, Paragraph 2 of Article 5, Paragraph 2 of Article 26, Paragraph 2 of Article 27, Provision 2, Paragraph 5 of Article 55-2 and Paragraph 10 of Article 55-3 of the Law on HEIs.

2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annexes 9 and 11, Provision 1, Paragraph 2 of Article 5, Paragraph 2 of Article 26, Paragraph 2 of Article 27, Provision 2, Paragraph 5 of Article 55-2 and Paragraph 10 of Article 55-3 of the Law on HEIs.

3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:** N/A

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The related requirements for the Study Programme have been met. There are no deficiencies which cannot be eliminated within the accreditation term.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Law Science"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law Science"

### Short-term recommendations

The College of Law will need to continuously review the standards of the 'Qualification Papers' to ensure that their quality is maintained.

The College of Law will need to continuously review the standards of the 'Qualification Papers' to ensure that their quality is maintained.

### Long-term recommendations

To include in the study programme more study courses in English to attract more foreign students and foreign lecturers.

Since the internship's purpose is obtaining new knowledge and skills resulting in 16 Credit Points, the provision of the College Internship Regulation allowing that the place of internship may be the student's workplace might be conditioned by a different position in the same workplace.

The descriptions of the study courses must be periodically updated with the newest legal manuals and legal texts to be used for studies as mandatory and recommended literature.

To include in the study programme more study courses in English to attract more foreign students and foreign lecturers.

Since the internship's purpose is obtaining new knowledge and skills resulting in 16 Credit Points, the provision of the College Internship Regulation allowing that the place of internship may be the student's workplace might be conditioned by a different position in the same workplace.

The descriptions of the study courses must be periodically updated with the newest legal manuals and legal texts to be used for studies as mandatory and recommended literature.

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

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

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:	Fully compliant			The College implements a well-versed internal Quality Assurance System that ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the Study Direction. (Part 2 of the Report)



Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.		Partially compliant		The College cooperates with different organisations, but it is unclear whether it ensures the achievement of the aims of the Study direction. (Part 5 of the Report)
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant			Directions of scientific research comply with the study direction, the aims of the College and the development level of scientific research. The academic staff's potential and College support is sufficient to carry out scientific activities. (Part 4 of the Report)
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.	Fully compliant			The College has eliminated all of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the Study Direction, with the exception of improving the foreign language skills of students and academic staff and the respective shortage of books and manuals in foreign languages. (Part 6 of the Report)

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

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Law Science	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant		Good

#### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

Dissenting opinion on the sustainability of the branches of the College of Law.

The College of Law has a long tradition and an eminent reputation in the field of legal education in Latvia. It has achieved a significant position in providing professional legal education, especially providing opportunities for life-long learning and further professional development for the students

who have completed previous higher or vocational education in a different field.

I believe that the College has got good chances to maintain and secure its position as a provider of professional legal education, but for that it is inevitable to make substantial changes in the structure and management of the institution and to significantly concentrate and focus its activities.

At present the College is providing the possibility of fulfilling the Study Programme of Law at least eight different turns within one academic year (in the mornings in Riga, in the evenings in Riga, on Saturdays in Riga, in the week-ends in Valmiera, Liepāja, Ventspils and Gulbene and via e-learning). In some occasions also extra courses are arranged to some specific groups. So the academic staff, among them also many high-level practitioners keep telling the same story over and over again to different small groups of students and do that each academic year again and again. They hardly have any spare time left for scientific work, further developing and updating their lecture materials or for contributing to the curriculum development.

I acknowledge the College for organizing the administrative work in the branches rather efficiently. As most of the activities are coordinated centrally from Riga, it is reasonably cost effective and guarantees the unified standard of academic work. But it has to be admitted that the volume of academic work in the branches is definitely not sufficient. During the whole study programme there are contact hours on 50 work days, which means 10 work weeks. During the site visit in Gulbene and Valmiera we asked, how much homework the students had, and the answer from different sources was that not much, maybe 3 hours per two days of lectures. Even assuming that they significantly underestimated the volume of homework (i.e 5 times), the total volume of academic work would be in that case 5 months, which is still four times less than required.

During the experts' site visit to the branches of Gulbene and Valmiera I also had a personal rather alarming experience meeting the attitude that giving higher education in this particular spot is among other things important because it helps to prevent local young people from leaving the region. I personally have got a very strong belief in the right of free movement and I really believe that the first priority of Latvia is to encourage their young people to use their full potential. I also believe that regions farther from the capital need people who voluntarily put their effort to developing these places, not the ones who do not have other choices or stay there because they are afraid and not encouraged to go somewhere else in Latvia or abroad to acquire new experience and higher education.

While assessing the capabilities of the institution to carry out several different activities, its size has also to be taken into consideration. The College of Law with its total number of students somewhat over 12 hundred is a modest sized higher educational institution even considering Latvian standards and has to consider that planning its activities. Without calling into question the fact that in some respect the students benefit from the present flexible organization of studies, it is beyond doubt that the academic quality must always be put as the top priority.

Taking into account all of the above I suggest the College of Law to close down the branches and redesign the study process, reallocate the remaining resources to curriculum development, build up a proper and up-to-date study programme in Riga and also a proper e-learning environment with the possibility to fulfill the whole programme digitally. Those changes could prove themselves to be a great development advantage and sustainability guarantee to the whole institution. The current COVID-19 crisis has also demonstrated the urgency and utmost necessity of the development of e-learning and hopefully also changed the mentality about the concepts of modern higher education.

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