

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Rīga Stradiņš University

Study field: Management, Administration and Management of Real Property

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## Summary Assessment of the Study Field

### Summary Assessment of the Study Field

The expert group acquainted with the Riga Stradins University (HEI/RSU) self-assessment report (SAR) of study field "Management, Administration and Management of Real Property" and after evaluating the information received during the visit, prepared a joint report. The report presents the compliance of the evaluated study field with the requirements and criteria; it highlights the positive and negative aspects; identifies recommendations for improvement.

The management of the study field is proactive and helps to ensure the further development of the study field and its programmes. The expert group welcomes the fact that the field of study and the results of its programmes meet the needs of society and the labor market, are related to the strategic goals of HEI, and are implemented in accordance with legal norms, and there is a strong focus on plagiarism prevention. However, experts note that bigger attention has to be paid to the identification of measures affecting the development of the country and region(s), monitoring of their implementation, analysis, and evaluation of effectiveness.

The expert group came to the opinion that the internal quality assurance system of studies is effective and adequate. HEI has established planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation, and improvement processes. The improvement of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders.

Resources and provision of the study field are good and sufficient for implementing study programmes of this particular study field. HEI has a great e-studies environment with edited high-class lecture recordings and Turnitin platform for plagiarism checks and a good library. Students are encouraged to use HEI provided mental-health and career consultations and are actively included in the social and economical life of HEI from their first study year with the help of a mentor. The expert group notes that the number of students in some programmes is quite low and therefore there is a risk of not profiting enough from student tutitions to reach the break-even point. Also of concern is the fact that study programmes for the Liepāja branch are in very early development stages, and there are no local teaching staff members from the study field yet.

Scientific research is conducted successfully, results are integrated into the study programmes of all levels, and students are involved in scientific research as well. Internationalization is moving to the right direction, however, it might be enlarged. There is a visible collaboration of the teaching staff with external stakeholders of HEI (e.g. business).

The development of existing cooperation and internationalization corresponds to the objectives of the study field and is generally assessed as sufficient. The expert group welcomes the development of Erasmus+ programme mobility activities. Both students and teaching staff actively participate in conferences and seminars in Latvia and abroad. There is a good balance between practice and theory in study programmes. However, experts are concerned about the narrow circle of strategic partnerships inside and outside the country (except Erasmus +), an insufficient number of international guest lecturers, and lack of a clear plan on how to attract students from abroad.

The significant changes have been implemented during the reporting period: changing titles of the study programmes, licensing, consolidation of the programmes. The major changes go in line with the Plan for Development and Consolidation of Study Programmes. Most of the suggestions by previous external evaluators are incorporated in the plan, however, in few cases suggestions from the previous evaluations have been left unattended and HEI should pay attention to this in the near

future.

The following is a summary of the pros and cons that apply to all of the evaluated study programmes. Detailed information on each evaluated study programme is provided in the report. All evaluated study field programmes are rated as good by the expert group. Interrelation between the name of the programmes, degree, aims, objectives, and admission requirements is quite strong. Some of the learning objectives may need to be revisited as they seem difficult to measure in study programmes. The learning outcomes could be more internationally or globally oriented. HEI pays a lot of attention to improving their material-technical provision for studies. The curriculum and manner of facilitating the lectures focus on the interaction between students, as well as between students and teaching staff. Individual attention is praised by all students and is expected of all teachers. The qualification and research record of the teaching staff is on a good level. The teaching staff is motivated and highly engaged. The collaboration of the teaching staff and administration is at good level and collaboration with the business representatives is intensive, as well. The expert group would like to highlight some common weaknesses identified in the SAR as well: there is some inconsistency in the descriptions of some study courses, keeping into consideration the intention of RSU to distinct study programmes targeted to the English and Latvian speaking audience (few courses are missing relevant literature in the language of tuition); some courses require updating the content (topics of lectures should be more relevant to today's business situation in the world, literature should be renewed and etc.); some description of the qualifications of the teaching staff is not directly linked with courses delivered by them; study programmes for the Liepāja branch are in very early development stages, and there are no local teaching staff members from the study field yet as a clear vision of finding students there; lack of quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period; low student numbers and high drop-out in some programmes (e.g. International Business and Law). Study materials corresponding to the distance learning methodology in Latvian and English are in the preparatory stage.”

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

### **Analysis**

1.1. The aim of the study field is clearly defined and attainable - to train highly qualified specialists in the field of economics and business management for Latvia, the European Union, and the entire world community and its management processes (SAR, p. 19). The aims of the study programmes are also clearly defined in terms of their content, level, and distinctiveness (SAR, p. 91, 123, 164, 199, 241, 278). The study field and the relevant study programmes comply with the main fields of the strategic development of the Rīga Stradiņš University (hereinafter - HEI/RSU) (SAR, p. 19-21). During the meetings with the HEI management and study programme managers, the expert group pointed out that the strategic action plan should be updated for a new period, highlighting the most important priorities related to the implementation of the study programmes fields and impact on stakeholders: internalization, scientific and technological progress and so on. Also, during a meeting with an expert group, HEI management, directors of the study field programmes and employers stated that the study programmes meet the needs of the society and national economy in general. However, the expert group lacked evidence about the more specific impact made of the study field programmes on regional and national developments, e.g. what promotes the development of the region, what areas has the HEI identified, where could its activities contribute, etc.? Graduates and employers are regularly asked by HEI to make recommendations on updating the content of the programmes, taking into account the needs of the labor market, as well as the peculiarities of economic development in Latvia. The implementation of the assessed field of study in Liepāja is in the plans of the HEI and it is in line with their mission and the new strategy being developed. In

meetings during an on-site visit in Liepaja the head of the Liepaja branch, employers from Kurzeme region, and representatives of Municipality noted that the region is planning rapid development of the Free Economic Zone so specialists who create high added value will definitely be needed. However, HEI and its Liepaja branch have not performed at the current time: the analysis of the need for the study field programmes to be implemented; the analysis of the context in the region and have not prepared a clear study development plan in this region.

1.2. The HEI has an approved management structure that helps to implement the study programmes of the study field, to ensure their development and quality in close cooperation with the head of the study field, the head of the relevant department, the faculty council, heads of the study programmes and also especially the Study Quality Councils (SQC). The role of the director of the study field and the heads of the study programmes, their responsibilities, and the cooperation with other heads of the study programmes were clearly presented in SAR (p. 26-27) and its annexes (4.2, 4.3). Decision-making is efficient and has been confirmed by students, teaching staff, and alumni during the meeting with the expert group. They mentioned that there are regular meetings during the year to take into account the needs and expectations. The support by the administrative and technical staff of HEI contributes to meeting all needs with regard to the relevant study programmes of the study field, particularly strong support is received from the IT Department, Study Department, Finance Department, Human Resource Department, and Center for Educational Growth. During a meeting with a group of experts, the teaching staff mentioned support provided by the Center for Educational Growth and IT Department as a good practice. The teaching staff had no complaints about the study organization process and conditions of work at the HEI.

1.3. Admission to RSU takes place based on admission requirements of the respective study level approved by the RSU Senate as defined for the particular academic year. In the same way, admission takes place and admission requirements are developed in accordance with external laws and regulations. HEI has admission regulations for each level of studies. The admission regulations are available on the RSU website in Latvian (<https://www.rsu.lv/studiju-iespejas/uznemsana/uznemsanas-noteikumi>) and in English (<https://www.rsu.lv/en/study-here/admissions>). RSU ensures fair recognition of previous education or professional experience in order for the applicant to be able to apply for studies in later stages of studies. This process is implemented by taking into account the fact that students are mobile both within the framework of the higher education system and between the educational systems (SAR, p. 28). The commission formed by the HEI makes a decision regarding recognition of knowledge, skills, and competences acquired outside formal education or in professional experience, as well as learning outcomes achieved in previous education. Its rights, duties, conditions for creation are included in "Regulations on Recognition of Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education or Professional Experience at Rīga Stradiņš University". According to the SAR (p. 30, 31) mainly the learning outcomes achieved in other study programmes at RSU or in few cases in other higher education institutions in Latvia are subject to recognition. No cases of recognition of professional experience are mentioned in the SAR. During a meeting with a group of experts, students and graduates did not provide any observations that they encountered uncertainties in the procedures for entering in RSU or problems with recognition of learning outcomes.

1.4. HEI has developed the RSU Code of Ethics and established the Ethics Commission that considers violations and cases of disputes on the basis of applications. RSU has developed an approved document "Methodological Guidelines for References and Listing of Reference Sources and Literature" and implemented the Unified Computerised Plagiarism Control System - "Turnitin" content originality control tool. For ease of use, the tool is integrated into the RSU e-studies website. In order to improve the teaching staff knowledge of the possibilities of this tool and to develop the

skills for using it, RSU Centre for Educational Growth regularly organises practical training for lecturers and support staff on the benefits and use of this tool for checking, correcting students' independent work and providing feedback in the study courses, as well as for checking qualification and diploma papers at the end of the study programme (SAR, p. 32-35). During a meeting with a group of experts, students and graduates were asked about plagiarism prevention in HEI. They confirmed that they had been introduced to the principles of fair study and the plagiarism detection tools as well. Also, during the tour of the facilities in HEI, an internal e-study environment was demonstrated, in which the papers of the students were uploaded for plagiarism screening and the identified coincidence processes were seen.

1.5. The information published on the homepage of the HEI regarding the relevant study programmes of the study field complies with the information available in the official registers. It provides important information for the candidates and the students and is published in all languages in which the study programmes are implemented (<https://www.rsu.lv/en/study-here> , <https://www.rsu.lv/pamatstudiju-programmas>).

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The study field and the relevant study programmes comply with the main fields of the strategic development of the HEI and meet the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy. The effectiveness of regional and country impact assessments could be improved.

HEI has clear management, decision-making, responsibilities are established distribution structure, executes regular management analysis, improvement assumptions and risk management measures. Stakeholders are sufficiently involved in decision-making.

HEI has established and is developing a clear admission procedure based on legislation. Consistent implementation of acquired qualifications, part-time studies, and recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning.

Academic integrity, tolerance are established and applied non-discrimination, appeal, ethics, and procedures at the HEI. The HEI has set certain academic integrity principles and mechanisms, and it uses appropriate plagiarism detection tools.

The information published on the homepage of HEI regarding the relevant study programmes of the study field complies with the information available in the official register.

Strengths:

1. The field of study and the results of its programmes meet the needs of society and the labor market, are related to the strategic goals of HEI, and are implemented in accordance with legal norms.
2. There is a strong focus on plagiarism prevention.

Weaknesses:

1. Insufficient attention is paid to the identification of measures affecting the development of the country and region(s), monitoring of their implementation, analysis, and evaluation of effectiveness.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. The HEI has established an internal quality assurance system in accordance with the ESG requirements, which is a part of its strategic management for the period from 2017 to 2021, and it is based on the objective and comprehensive SWOT and content analysis. In general, supervision of HEI activities is ensured by everyday activities, for example, approval, validation, evaluation of work

quality, distribution of duties and responsibilities, etc. At the same time, targeted control measures have been implemented that are used in various periods throughout the year. Requirements for planning, supervision, and quality control of the study process in RSU are determined by Process Description No. 6, 35 (SAR, p. 34-36). During meetings with accreditation experts, HEI management, SAR group members, directors of study field and programmes, they gave an explanation and examples of how they ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes (conducts student surveys, organizes informal and formal meetings with social partners, students, has joint meetings with course teachers and so on). During meetings accreditation experts, teaching staff, employers and students confirmed that the process of improving the internal quality of studies takes place on a regular basis and throughout the year (surveys, meetings, feedback). During the meetings, the expert group did not get strong confirmation that alumni are directly involved in the process of improving the study programmes, although the SAR (p. 26, 70) noted that an alumni representative is included in the Study Quality Council.

2.2. The HEI has a set of procedures in place for development, internal approval of study programmes, supervision, and periodic inspection of the operation thereof (SAR, annex 1.3). The annual revision process of study programmes and study fields regulated by an annual order of the Rector and the goal is to prepare a summary of the annual study process quality monitoring (SAR, p. 37-39). Mechanism of obtaining and providing feedback in work with students, graduates, and feedback from/to employers could be defined as efficient, and available for all stakeholders. During the meeting with the experts, the management of HEI stated the main performance indicators of RSU, the profile of the student contingent, study process of the students, the satisfaction of students with the programme, available study aids and support to students, and career process of alumni are regularly identified, discussed in internal collegial institutions, where future activity for raising the study quality level is planned and implemented. The Director of the study field has a clear enough understanding of the mechanism of operation of the internal quality system (explained how the study programmes are improved, how feedback is received and passed on to teachers and students). Close communication and cooperation between teachers, teachers, and students were highlighted as an advantage. The fields of the developed partnerships were named (practice places, visiting lecturers, projects, study visits to companies, etc.).

2.3. The HEI has developed a system for centralised collection and analysis of key data related to the study process. The system provides a clear division of responsibilities for data analysis at various levels (institutional level, study field, and programme levels, faculty and academic structural unit levels and study course level), drawing conclusions and providing feedback on the changes planned and implemented in the study process as a result of the analysis. HEI collects data on general statistical indicators: number of students, student success rate, drop-out rates, and its causes, as well as admission results. Student performance is analysed twice per academic year after the end of the autumn and spring semesters, employee survey - once per year (information from expert group meeting). For more in-depth data analysis, quality indicators of study programmes at RSU (SAR, annex 2.5) were developed in 2016. The relevant data is collected over the academic year. Analysis of study programme quality indicators and implementation of the development plan of the study field demonstrates HEI's ability to manage change and risk. Some of the activities to be improved identified in the development plan have already been implemented, others are still in the implementation process (SAR, annex 4.1, sent supplemented by experts upon request during the visit).

2.4. The HEI has identified the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG and determined aims and measures, which are integrated into a joint quality assurance system (SAR, annex 23). Special

attention is paid to those quality standards related to the student-centered approach, the diversification, modernisation, digitisation of teaching methods, and the improvement of assessment methods (SAR, annex 2.5 and annex 4.1).

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

The HEI has approved and publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are in line with the European Higher Education Area quality assurance regulations and guidelines.

The HEI has established planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation, and improvement processes. The internal quality assurance system is implemented through a system of quality monitoring mechanism based on the audit, survey reports, meetings, feedback, discussions.

The HEI has developed a system for centralised collection and analysis of key data related to the study process. The system has a clear division of responsibilities for data analysis at various levels.

The internal quality assurance system involves all stakeholders of the higher education institution, but the role of alumni should be much stronger and focused on the improvement of the study programmes content, process, and achievement of strategic goals of the HEI.

Strengths:

1. The improvement of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders, as well as continuous monitoring and publicity.

Weaknesses:

None identified.

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

#### **Analysis**

3.1. RSU has developed a system dedicated to determining the financial resources needed for implementing the study field and study programmes. The system is based on planning the study programme by the number of credit points and contact hours and heavily takes into account previous student admission rates. (SAR, p. 49). Necessary financial resources are calculated annually. Although the study programmes in particular study field in RSU are not financed by the state, with an exception for the doctoral study programme, as the study programmes are unique and relevant, HEI attracts needed financial resources for the implementation of study programmes via tuition fees, which are covered by students themselves and also by their employers, as indicated in SAR (p. 47) and confirmed during interviews. There are some concerns about the break-even point for these study programmes and the relatively small number of students enrolled in them. Financial sustainability should be taken into consideration in the context of opening these study programmes in English, especially in the competitive market in this study field. This should also be taken into account while opening these study programmes in the Liepāja branch as the population there is a lot smaller than in Riga. Scientific research is funded by science base funding, external research and cooperation based projects, and RSU own finances (SAR, p. 47; p. 71), but it also should be mentioned that a lot of RSU projects and teaching staff scholarships are financed by Boris and Inara Teterev foundation (SAR, p. 78).

3.2. RSU has definitely identified infrastructure resources and provisions needed for the implementation of the study field, and the resources are available for students as they could be assessed during the visit. All students can access Eduroam WiFi and are eligible for using RSU computers for study and research activities if needed. Office 365 and OneDrive storage cloud is available for students to use free of charge, during their study process (SAR p. 50). RSU has a very

well-developed e-studies environment, where students can find not only the necessary materials for their study work but also recorded and sometimes fully edited, structured lectures, with timestamps for different parts of the lecture. E-studies also can be used for testing purposes. RSU also uses Turnitin and Respondus to ensure academic integrity (SAR, p. 111). Students also use the student portal and both platforms are integrated into one - MyRSU, which is also available as an application, usable on smartphones (SAR, p. 52). RSU students are also eligible to take part in a newly opened business incubator, which is also used in the study process of particular study programmes as it was also mentioned during the visit. In normal conditions, students would have 24h access to the library resources, locally (SAR p. 53), which is impossible during the COVID-19 period, therefore leaving students with remote access to library materials and databases and in case of necessity only to order books from the library, not to study there. Although the library is mainly dedicated to the medical sector, as it could be assessed during the site visit and also read in the SAR (SAR, p. 56-57), in total the library offered resources regarding the study field are good and sufficient for implementing these study programmes. RSU and its library have a certain system for supplementation of literature and database subscriptions, which is described in SAR (SAR, p. 56). In general, RSU has almost all necessary materials for implementing these study programmes in almost all forms, but for full-time distance learning and part-time extramural study distance education in all study programmes, the only materials, which could be assessed were databases, and e-study environment, with lecture recordings, which although are outstanding, but not sufficient for fully implemented distance learning in both languages. As RSU has adapted to the remote study model very quickly and currently is in process of adaptation for all study programmes, the mentioned process hasn't been finished with full study material complexes for all intended versions of existing study programmes, as the preparation of the distance education materials is in the progress now. What comes to the Liepāja branch, then the library and material resources there are sufficient for organising a study process, but besides the e-resources available, according to what could be assessed during the visit, the library offers a noticeably smaller amount of the study field related literature. Although, experts are paying attention that in general, textbooks and parts of textbooks are protected by copyright. There is no information provided in the SAR on how the copyright issue is solved at RSU. Material resources in Liepāja, knowing the early stages of developing this study programme in Liepāja branch are more suited for medical education, which can be noted in the annex as well (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf, Annex of SAR). Besides the administrative support, classrooms, computer class, and library, experts cannot assess the study and informative resources as equal to the RSU library, although with the existing resources from RSU alone, it is possible to implement these study programmes from any geographical location.

3.3. RSU has developed procedure for attracting highly skilled teaching staff in “Regulations of Rīga Stradiņš University on Academic Staff Positions” (<https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/documents/RSU-Nolikums-par-akademiskajiem-amatiem-2016.pdf>) (SAR, p. 57-59). The academic and research workload is balanced, as the teaching staff is encouraged to take part in both - academic activities targeted to improve teaching methods and research very actively. It is proven by the fact that teaching staff is offered specific scholarships by Boris and Inara Teterev foundation in order to create new, innovative study courses (SAR, p. 78). The teaching staff is encouraged to use mobility possibilities very actively, during the last 4 years, delivering lectures abroad, studying abroad, and taking part in conferences( SAR, annex 6.3.). The teaching staff is eligible to use the services of RSU Centre for Educational Growth, and discounts for tuition fees in RSU (SAR, p. 60), to support lifelong learning activities if they choose to continue studies. RSU also uses the Performance Management System developed by the university in order to monitor the performance of the teaching staff, and assess and discuss the achieved results during the study process, and decide on further support measures for the teaching staff members in order to improve (SAR, p. 61). RSU also has started a School of Junior Academics in order to give more



experience to the young lecturers in RSU (SAR, p. 62). Unfortunately, it was impossible to assess these aspects for the Liepāja branch study programmes, as the study programmes there are only in very early development stages, as it was concluded during the visit and the emphasis in these study programmes is planned on combining virtual lectures from lecturers from RSU with lectures from local teaching staff, there are no local teaching staff members in these study programmes at the moment to assess.

3.4. RSU offers students the possibility to use resident physician services for students free of charge focusing on mental health issues, and support for students with functional restrictions, to promote inclusivity and independence for students with special needs (SAR, p. 66-67). RSU also provides the services of Career center giving career consultations for students in need (SAR, p 67).

RSU International department is working with RSU international students, helping them adapt to Riga, and start studies in RSU properly, giving instructions about the possibilities and resources provided by RSU( SAR, p.67).

RSU also offers the possibility for students to take part in extracurricular activities and participate in the student self-governing body of RSU - RSU Student Union, or for international students, its counterpart - RSU International Students' Association (SAR, p. 68). RSU also organizes the mentor programme for the first-year local and international students, which allows the first-year students to be assisted by more experienced students who help to ensure better integration in the social and study processes by answering their most burning questions about the study process (SAR, p. 68). As currently, Liepāja branch has shown that they provide strong administrative support to their students from the medical study field, from the site visit it could be assessed that the same support could be provided to the students of the management field. Students have the possibility to participate in the RSU Students' council of Liepāja branch.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Resources and provision of the study field are good and sufficient for implementing study programmes of this particular study field. Most of the funding for the study field comes from tuition fees, but the number of students is relatively low, which can cause problems if study programmes become more fragmented in the future. RSU has a great e-studies environment with edited high-class lecture recordings and Turnitin platform for plagiarism checks and a good library, which are very important for these study programmes. The teaching staff has a number of tools to use in order to improve their skills in teaching and research activities, including a wide variety of mobility possibilities, and scholarships. Students in this study field are encouraged to use RSU provided mental-health and career consultations and are actively included in the social and economical life of RSU from their first study year with the help of a mentor. What comes to Liepāja branch and intended study programmes there, it is clear, that these study programmes are in very early development stage and as the infrastructure is sufficient to implement them, available resources from the library are noticeably narrower than in Riga, and there are no local teaching staff members in this study field to assess at the moment.

### **Strengths:**

1. Outstanding e-studies environment for students, which include high-class lecture recordings and a big emphasis on academic integrity.
2. Strong administrative and psycho-emotional support for students.

### **Weaknesses:**

1. Number of students in some programmes is quite low and therefore there is a risk of not profiting enough from student tuitions to reach the break-even point. This is even more worrying if RSU is

going to offer different new variations (part time, different languages, distance education) of the existing study programmes.

2. Study programmes for the Liepāja branch are in very early development stages, and there are no local teaching staff members from the study field yet.

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

##### **Analysis**

4.1. RSU has a history from 1950 closely integrated into the state healthcare system. It was accredited in 2001 (SAR, p. 5). The fields of scientific research correspond to the Department of International Business and Economics (hereinafter - DIBE). The aims of DIBE answer to the aims of RSU. The scientific strategy of RSU is based on all three of the University's key directions of action - internationally competitive education, excellent research, and technology transfer to strengthen innovation as the foundation for RSU's sustainable development. (SAR, p. 69). Although, the experts noticed that the contribution of the DIBE to the technology transfer or other related valorization activities are not enough presented in the SAR. The study programmes are connected with the research activities run by the Department (<https://www.rsu.lv/en/department-international-business-and-economics>). The doctoral programme Business Management and Economics is directly linked with the scientific research activities of the Department (SAR, p. 71). Doctoral studies are supported by the RSU Department of Doctoral Studies. RSU provides grants to doctoral students for conducting research.

4.2. The academic staff is involved in research in business and economics. The bachelor's programmes have academic profiles so they deliver more basic knowledge equipped with more academic research outcomes. Masters programmes have professional profiles and in the programmes is involved more staff with professional experience. Doctoral programme has a research approach and it is equipped with the relevant research staff (SAR, annexes 6 and 19). Based on the observations during the site visit, it is visible that academic staff have a practical background but it is also involved in the research.

4.3. The RSU list of international projects assure wide range of international cooperation (SAR, annex 6.2). However the number of foreign students and teaching staff is very small - in the period 2014/2015-2020/2021 there were only 2 foreign students and 2 foreign teachers noticed (SAR, annex 8.1). The international mobility of the teaching staff is at a satisfactory level (SAR, annex 6.3). In the teaching programmes there are involved guest teachers, for example from Spain and the Netherlands however during the visit there was not recognized international cooperation on the level of programmes (e.g. joint programmes, double-degree programmes) and the study field (membership in the international networks related to the study field, submission for international accreditations, etc.).

4.4. RSU is successfully developing its mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research. There is a clear motivation system for recognizing research activities (SAR, p. 74-75). The new research staff is recruited according to the objectives defined in the RSU strategy and the department responsible for the management programmes. There are also mechanisms for attracting doctoral students and visiting lecturers. (SAR, p. 75). Lecturers with professional experience are also engaged (SAR, annex 6.2). At the same time, RSU faces the general challenge specified for the Higher Education Sector - attracting the highly skilled persons for the academic work. During the visit, an opportunity for RSU was identified - wider engagement of external stakeholders of RSU, for example, employers, to deliver more courses in the evaluated programmes.

4.5. There is visible student involvement in the research at all 3 study levels. Indicators of student involvement is growing. For example, bachelor students in 2020 submitted 10 abstracts and there were 7 participants with presentations in the RSU International Student Conference compared to 5 abstracts and 5 participants in 2015 (SAR, p. 76). A similar level of involvement of master students is expected from RSU. RSU declares that the involvement of doctoral students should be higher. For example, they participate in supervising the semester papers of the Bachelor's programme students. During the visit above information was confirmed. The main challenge is broad activities of students outside RSU which leads to a high workload of students and limited time for offered research activities by RSU.

4.6. Innovative solutions in the study process are listed by RSU (SAR, p. 78-80): mapping, targeted scholarships of Boris and Inara Teterev Foundation (BITF), and IT infrastructure (for example, students have access to mobile application MyRSU). During the visit, there were identified examples of innovative solutions in the field of infrastructure (e.g. mobile applications), of teaching & learning methods (e.g. inviting students to conduct self-assessment evaluation before the class and then after the class, audit/research projects for external stakeholders of RSU).

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Scientific research is conducted successfully, results are integrated into the study programmes, internationalization is sufficient however it might be improved. There is a visible collaboration of the teaching staff with external stakeholders of RSU (e.g. business). Innovation solutions in the study process have also been recognized by experts.

Strengths:

1. Results of scientific research are integrated into study programmes of all levels.
2. Students are involved in scientific research.
3. Good collaboration network with external stakeholders of RSU.
4. Broad implementation of innovative solutions in the study process.

Weaknesses:

1. International cooperation at both the study programmes level and the study field level might be strengthened.
2. Valorization activities are quite limited.

## **5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

5.1. The aim of the study field is to prepare highly qualified professionals in economics and entrepreneurship for Latvia, the European Union and beyond. RSU cooperates with Latvian and foreign institutions in various formats - inviting guest lecturers; organizing study visits to employers; defining joint topics for study papers; participating in international conferences, seminars, hackathons; running business incubator, etc. Students benefit from the academic - industry cooperation by better understanding of industry development, business processes, and business culture. On another side, employers are able to get better insights into the students' life who will soon become members of the labour market. Industry is providing financial support to the university. For example, employers (they have mentioned it in the interview) cover tuition fees for students. After graduation from bachelor programme, graduates start to work in their profession (they have mentioned it in the interview) and at the same time they can continue studies in the master programme. Study field graduates have good employment opportunities in domestic and

international companies. Cooperation with employers is ongoing at various levels, that was confirmed by interviews with employers. During the site visit employers expressed satisfaction with both the study process and the knowledge that graduates have obtained during their studies. Employers are contributing as members of state examination committees, they evaluate defense of Master and Bachelor theses. Both lecturers and students undergo practical training in companies, participate in other academic activities such as joint conferences, seminars.

Cooperation agreements with external institutions, are in force, for example (SAR, annex 7):

- Latvian Art Directors Club (LADC)
- LECSA (Latvian European Community Study Association)
- Company Spilva
- SIA EVOTEK
- Owa Ltd.
- Marketing Agency BSMS, etc.

RSU is a member of the Latvian Association of Business Efficiency, Employers' Confederation of Latvia, and the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In cooperation with LECSA, the Latvian European Community Studies Association, RSU provides an opportunity to students to participate in the study visit to the EU's leading institutions, research centers, the Brussels business incubator. RSU cooperates with the University of Bremen, Business School of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts North-western Switzerland (FHVW) and UBI - United Business Institutes, Brussels (Brussels Branch of Middlesex University Business School). The successful cooperation with Latvia's Art Directors Club was also confirmed by the industry representative during the site visit. LADC provides opportunities to meet marketing and advertising companies and agency professionals in Latvia and Europe. Students are very active in attending LADC events which are free of charge. Successful cooperation in the field of social sciences with Riga Secondary School No 41 and Riga Classical Gymnasium has been developed. The incubator of RSU has also been recently created, where the students can learn how to implement their business ideas.

RSU International Department (hereinafter - ID) has established partnership with HEI in Europe. Partner universities are informed about Erasmus exchange opportunities at RSU. Each year RSU organizes Erasmus + International Week for the local and international students. RSU students have the opportunity to go for exchange studies or international practice. In general, more than 150 bilateral cooperation agreements provide opportunities for student and personnel mobility at all study cycles – bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies (SAR, annex 7). Previous recommendations of accreditation experts concerning cooperation and internationalization have to be taken into account. (SAR, annex 11).

Although it is mentioned that the RSU ID has established an extensive network of collaborating higher education institutions in Europe, the policy of choosing international partners is unclear. Only Erasmus partnership agreements have been presented in Annex 7. No other international cooperation agreement is mentioned. Accreditation experts identified that the choice of international partners is not careful enough. As a result, for example, the list of international cooperation partners includes the institution Euroacademy (Estonia), which has been deprived of the right to implement higher education programmes to foreign students (<https://news.postimees.ee/4245301/police-bans-euroacademy-from-taking-foreign-students>). Such a case doesn't contribute to the international reputation of RSU. There is a minor error related to the state of origin of the partner university St.Cyril and St.Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo which in reality is located in Bulgaria, not Czechia (SAR, annex 7). There is confusing information that RSU is collaborating in the Erasmus Mundus programme and the university has appropriate agreements with more than a dozen of European universities (<https://www.rsu.lv/en/departments-international-business-and-economics>), however, nothing about

that is mentioned in the SAR. The major weakness is a lack of international cooperation policy. RSU currently is not a member of any major international network in the field of management education and research. It is not clear how the ambitious internationalization goals related to the study field will be achieved without setting a formal policy and principles for international cooperation. Membership at the international networks is important to follow the latest trends and developments in the field, as well as international networking.

Cooperation with another higher education institutions in Latvia in the field of management is very limited and it is not formalized.

5.2. Within the study field, both directions of student mobility have been actively implemented through the Erasmus + programme (8-2\_pielik\_Studejoso\_mobilitate\_VANIP\_ENG (1).pdf, Annexes of SAR). A summary of statistical data on incoming and outgoing mobility within the reporting period is presented in Annex 6.3. However some information presented in the Annex 6.3 does not provide value for evaluation of the study field as it is either inaccurate/ incomplete or it clearly refers to the field of medicine, not management. Two full-time foreign students - one from the US and one from Cameroon - study in the study field. Few foreign guest lecturers were attracted from Switzerland, Belgium, German and Indian universities (incoming mobility) and several RSU lecturers have visited universities in Switzerland, Germany, India and other countries (outgoing mobility). Foreign guest lecturers are identified at the international conferences, international projects, and other formats.

5.3. Student placement is an integral part for the bachelor's and master's study programmes of the study field.

Methodological guidelines have been developed, the guidelines are updated annually.

The aim of the student's placement, the skills to be acquired, the obligatory practice tasks, optional tasks, as well as the structure, scope, presentation requirements, and deadlines of the documentary report of the practice are clearly described in the guidelines.

Thanks to the active, systematic cooperation with employers, finding practical placements doesn't create problems. Some students find placement for themselves. Students of the International Marketing and Advertising Programme receives e-mails or calls in which companies and international organizations are looking for students to provide placement opportunities.

5.4. As it was mentioned already, the policy of choosing international partners for the study field is unclear. Despite that there are good examples of international cooperation within the study field in place.

Within the framework of RSU's existing international academic and scientific cooperation in the field of social sciences, the possibility of developing joint study programmes have been considered (SAR, page 86), for example, with the Business School of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts North-western Switzerland (FHNW), with the United Business Institute (UBI), Brussels (Brussels branch of Middlesex University Business School), with the University of Bremen. However, the joint study programmes have not been established yet.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The development of existing cooperation and internationalization corresponds to the objectives and development plan for the study field and the development plan. Cooperation with institutions (employers, employers' organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc.) can be evaluated as successful. With regard to study programmes, further recommended developments in the future are to involve more organizations, like Altum, LATBAN (Latvian Business Angels Network). Study programmes have good balance of theoretical knowledge and the practical side. It allows programmes to respond quickly to labour market changes. The incubator of RSU has also been

recently created, where the students can learn how to implement their business ideas. More active involvements of the international guest lecturers would allow students to strengthen knowledge of the international business, especially in the field of marketing and advertising. Partner universities are selected based on available information on equivalent study programmes and training language conditions. As a recommendation, it would also be good to widen cooperation with universities in Latvia. Study programmes and study courses are constantly updated and adapted to the rapidly changing socio-economic situation in Latvia and the world. Overall, cooperation with industry institutions, employers promotes reaching the study field objectives and results. It would be recommended to try to attract more foreign students and lecturers in the future. Thanks to the study field programmes active, systematic cooperation with employers students can easily find placements. RSU does not have a joint study programme at the moment. Discussions on the development of joint study programmes are ongoing, but active measures are postponed.

#### Strengths:

1. Successful and close cooperation with employers, employers' organizations.
2. A wide range of cooperation agreements with foreign universities providing Erasmus mobility.
3. Both students and teaching staff actively participate in conferences and seminars in Latvia and abroad.
4. Employers are actively involved in the realization of study programmes at all stages from guest lectures to providing internship opportunities.
5. Close cooperation with Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has developed.
6. There is a good balance between practice and theory in the study programmes.

#### Weaknesses:

1. The major weakness is a lack of international cooperation policy. No international cooperation agreement apart of Erasmus+ exchange agreements is highlighted in the SAR. It is not clear how the extremely ambitious international goals related to the study field and to the social sciences\* will be achieved without setting a formal ground for international cooperation and without joining the specific (management field) international professional networks.

\*Vision: To become a leading education and research center in Northern Europe, studying international relations, strategic communications, the digital economy and artificial intelligence, as well as start-ups in the Eurasian region. (<https://www.rsu.lv/petnieciba/petniecibas-platformas-un-nozares>)

2. A small number of foreign guest lecturers.
3. Limited financial resources for attracting foreign guest lecturers.
4. Relatively limited collaboration with organizations that support start-up entrepreneurship which is one of the study field programme specifics.
5. Relatively limited scientific and academic cooperation with other universities in Latvia.
6. Confusing information about the international Erasmus Mundus partnership in the www of RSU.

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

### **Analysis**

A number of improvements and activities are implemented in the study process, for example, study environment and support has been developed significantly, feedback mechanism with students have been improved, the number of guest lectures has increased, course descriptions have been updated, involvement of students in scientific research have been increased, linking of the study process with labour market have been strengthened etc.

The following significant changes have been implemented during the reporting period:

- 1) the title of the bachelor's study programme European Economics and Business have been changed to International Business and Sustainable Economy (13.03.2015);
- 2) the title of the bachelor's study programme Management of Small and Medium-size Businesses was changed to Start-up Business Management (13.03.2015);
- 3) master's study programme Management of International Marketing and Business was licensed (18.09.2015; 26.02.2016);
- 4) the title of the master's study programme Business and Law in the European Union was changed to International Business and Law (08.06.2016);
- 5) doctoral study programme Management Science was licensed (25.09.2017);
- 6) the study programme Startup Entrepreneurship have been consolidated into the new study programme International Business and Start-up Entrepreneurship (25.02.2020)

RSU is optimizing the offer of their study programmes according to the Plan for Development and Consolidation of Study Programmes agreed by the Committee for the Evaluation of Plans for Development and Consolidation of Study Programmes established by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2018 and 2019. The experts reviewed the Execution of the Plan for Implementation of Recommendations provided in the Annex 11 of SAR. It was complicated for experts to evaluate to what extent the particular recommendations of that plan have been implemented as a lot of the results to be achieved are very general. They are not specific and not measurable. Some such examples of definitions of the outcomes to be achieved (Annex 11 of SAR): "Library collection ... is maintained on a regular basis..." (outcome 2, 11), "Student evaluation ... has been increased" (outcome 5), "Increased student participation in scientific activities..." (outcome 10), "Cooperation with employers..." (outcome 13), "Growing indicators of international cooperation ... mobility, projects, international academic cooperation ..." (outcome 14). Item No 14 suggests that "Internationalisation of study programmes should be improved". Item No 15 suggests that "Plans to attract foreign students need to be improved." Although the Erasmus+ exchange student exchange is taking place, experts identified that there is still space to expand other international activities. Only two full-time students have been studying management during the evaluation periods.

The recommendations provided during the previous procedures for the assessment of the study field (accreditation, licensing of the study programmes, evaluation of the changes in the relevant study programmes of the study field) have been implemented partially. HEI has partially fulfilled these recommendations:

- cooperation with other higher education institutions, scientific institutions, labour market and professional organizations;
- focus on international cooperation.

The Erasmus + mobility programme is being implemented, the number of guest lecturers is increasing (SAR, p. 65-66, annex 6.3), but the HEI should pay more attention to the development of strategic partnerships in the country and abroad. The fields of partnership should be as diverse as possible: studies, research, projects, etc. The Plan for Implementation of Recommendations needs improvement in order to make results specific and measurable.

Few suggestions from the previous evaluation activities have been left unattended. E.g., it was suggested in the licencing report (20/02/2020): "Izvērtēt studiju kursa "Jaunuzņēmumu patenti" nosaukuma atbilstību tā saturam." Looks like the strange concept of "start-up patents" have not been discussed. There is no clarity in the course description what does start-up patents mean and why particularly only start-up patents should be studied instead of studying patents and intellectual property in whole. Another recommendation provided in the same licencing report is: "Ieteicams veikt akadēmiskā personāla zinātnisko aktivitāšu analīzi, nodalot tās zinātniskās aktivitātes (arī publikācijas), kuras attiecas uz doto studiju virzienu un mācībspēka pasniegtā kursa jomu no tām aktivitātēm, kuras attiecas uz citu jomu." Significant portion of the scientific activities related to the field of medicine, which are irrelevant for evaluation of the management field are present in the

current accreditation documents again. That makes evaluation process more complicated for the experts because they are forced to separate the relevant information from the irrelevant.

## Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

The significant changes have been implemented during the reporting period: changing titles of the study programmes, licensing, consolidation of the programmes. The major changes go in line with the Plan for Development and Consolidation of Study Programmes. RSU is paying attention to the continuous improvement of the study programmes and the study process. Regarding the implementation of the specific recommendations suggested by the previous evaluators, it was complicated for experts to evaluate to what extent some specific recommendations have been implemented as a lot of the results to be achieved (Execution of the Plan for Implementation of Recommendations) are not specific and not measurable. Most of the suggestions by external evaluators are incorporated in the plan, however, in few cases suggestions from the previous evaluations have been left unattended.

### Strengths:

1. The significant conceptual changes of the study field go in line with the Plan for Development and Consolidation of Study Programmes.
2. RSU is following the changes and trends of the market.

### Weaknesses:

1. The number of the results to be achieved, defined in the Plan for Implementation of Recommendations are not specific and not measurable. As a result, evaluation of the progress is difficult for both internal and external stakeholders.
2. Few suggestions from the previous evaluations have been left unattended.

## 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:** HEI ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems components.

- 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:** HEI has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education. These documents are described in Section I, Paragraph 1.3 and Section II, Paragraph 2 of the Description and determine the quality mechanisms of the study process for the RSU and are applicable to complete all study programmes. (SAR, p. 35-38).

- 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:** HEI has a mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed. The mechanism described in detail in Section II, Paragraph 2.2 and is applicable to completely all study programmes.(SAR, p. 36, 37). <https://www.rsu.lv/en/about-us/strategy>



- 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, 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.
- 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:** Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the teaching staff and the work quality have been developed. Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been described in Section II, Paragraph 3.5 of SAR. Each year compliance assessment is conducted, and the mechanisms are reviewed.
- 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:** HEI 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 teaching staff, the study funds available, and the disbursements thereof, as well as the key performance indicators of the HEI. (SAR, Paragraph 1.2; 1; 2.2; 3.1; 3.5; 3.7; 4.1; 2.6 and Annex No.: 2.1; 2.2). During meetings with experts, students, lecturers, graduates, employers confirmed that data is collected, analyzed, and presented on a regular basis.
- 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:** HEI ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their quality assurance systems. The description is in Section I, Paragraph 1.4, Section II, Paragraph 2 of SAR. See the development plan of the study field in Annex 4.1 of SAR, and the structural flowchart of the management of the study field in Annex 4.2 of SAR.
- 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 cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study field partly ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field. (SAR, annex 7).  
 HEI needs to expand the circle of strategic partners to include different organizations and associations in Latvia and especially abroad. The fields and subjects of cooperation should be much wider than Erasmus + mobility or placements for local students.  
 HEI has not set priorities for the development of partnerships or set specific results to be achieved. The main activities of the partnerships are related to the invitation of teachers to lectures and the implementation of projects
- 9 R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Scientific research is at a sufficient level.

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:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** HEI has not fully fulfilled the recommendations of Experts provided in previous accreditation of the study field.

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

Clarify the information about the international Erasmus Mundus partnership in the www of RSU.

### Long-term recommendations

Consider establishing cooperation with Latvian Business Angels Network (LATBAN).

Extend cooperation opportunities with universities in Latvia.

Develop clear policies/principles for building international partnerships. Consider how to increase number of international faculty.

Join international networks particularly in the field of management.

Review the Plan for Implementation of Recommendations and redefine the results to be achieved to be measurable.

Take the suggestions provided by experts as valuable resources for further improvements, not as a burden. Distinguish information clearly related to the field of medicine from the ones in the field of management.

Develop a strategy how to minimize the risk of operation under the break-even point. This is particularly important if RSU is going to offer different new variations (part time, different languages, distance education) of the existing study programmes.

Complete preparation for delivering the study programmes for the Liepāja branch (market research, local faculty etc.). Consider test admission of the remote students at Riga campus instead of admitting them at the region.

Strengthen valorization activities.

Adjust the extremely ambitious international goals with the real capacity of the university.

## II. "International Marketing and Advertising" ASSESSMENT

### II. "International Marketing and Advertising" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

Study programme name and degree:

The title of the degree to be obtained corresponds to the Cabinet Regulation No. 322 on the Classification of Education in Latvia: Bachelor of Social Sciences in Marketing and Advertising (Sociālo zinātņu bakalaura grāds tirgzinībās un reklāmā). The degree (120 CP and 180 ECTS) is given

in a full time format over a three year (6 semester) period. There are plans to offer the programme also in a part time and distance learning format. According to the SAR the programme is currently taught in the Latvian language only . At the same time Erasmus visiting students are joining the programme regularly, which creates some confusion about the real study language.

Mission, aims/programme objectives/outcomes:

The mission of the study programme is described as: “to prepare academically educated and demanded marketing and advertising professionals with in-depth knowledge of advertising, marketing, brand management who are able to adapt to dynamic changes in international marketing and business environment, and be able to quality operate in both private and government sectors, and continue Master’s degree studies”. This mission is supported by the 15 learning outcomes in which scientific learning outcomes (knowledge) are represented (examples: learning outcome 7, 15) as well as professional learning outcomes (skills and competencies) (examples 10, 11, 12, and 13). Addressing the international orientation of the programme is found in three learning goals (1, 3, and 4). Student interviews provided evidence of a programme that is well in tune with the market and is internationally oriented. Students were commendable about the personal attention, the options to study in foreign countries, and the engagement with each other and their professors.

The mission is appropriate for the bachelor level and relates to the mission of the larger institution. The learning outcomes derive from this mission and seem well aligned. Of all 15 learning outcomes (LO) only four mention global or international, which seems limited for an international programme. Some of the learning objectives need to be revisited as they seem difficult to measure (example LO 5 and 7). Considering that this is an international programme, an active internationalization strategy is recommended, to further increase the number of incoming and outgoing students and faculty, the number (and diversity in) partners in and outside Europe, and increase the number of courses provided in English. Although the techniques and tools to deliver this programme distance-based are in place, the programme is not yet offered distance-based and therefore cannot be evaluated at this time.

Admission requirements:

To enter the programme, applicants must have their secondary education completed, submit letters of recommendation and a motivation statement. When appropriate take an English language test and obtain a minimum on the IELTS of 6.5 or equivalent.

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

Interrelation between the name of the programme, degree, aims, objectives, and admission requirements:

The HEI has met criterion 1 as the name of the study programme, the degree to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The learning outcomes derive from this mission and seem well aligned. Some of the learning objectives may need to be revisited as they seem difficult to measure. The learning outcomes could be more internationally or globally oriented.

Although the techniques and tools to deliver this programme distance-based are in place, the programme is not yet offered distance-based and therefore cannot be evaluated at this time.

Strengths:

1. Engaged students and lecturers.
2. A market-relevant and industry-involved mission and outcome-driven curriculum.

Weaknesses:

1. Considering that this is an international programme, an active internationalization strategy is recommended, to further increase the number of incoming and outgoing students and faculty, the number (and diversity in) partners in and outside Europe and increase the number of courses provided in English. As this programme is an international programme, more emphasis should be put on the international character of the programme to be expressed in learning outcomes.
2. Some of the learning outcomes need to be revisited to make them better measurable (for instance LO 5) or to ensure that not too many sub-outcomes are captured with one learning outcome (for instance LO 7).

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. Descriptions of the study courses/modules and final thesis: The descriptions of study courses and placements are presented in English (20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_MR\_ENG.pdf, Annex of SAR) and in Latvian (20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_MR\_LV.pdf, Annex of SAR). Course descriptions provide an understanding of the course content and expectations for the full and part-time versions of the study programme. However, after careful review of the course descriptions experts discovered certain deficiencies. No distinctive course descriptions are prepared for studies in English and in Latvian. Some sources of literature are old. Some courses are lacking textbooks covering the essence of the course.

Here are some examples:

- The English version of the courses "Introduction to the Theory of Law", "Mathematics", "Basics of Accounting" have required readings/ literature only in Latvian;
- The course "Theory of Microeconomics" has no single book in Microeconomics in the list of literature, all the literature is covering Mathematics. All the sources are in Latvian only. The newest two literature sources are 16 years old. Besides, those books are designed for the students of technical higher education institutions (Matemātika tehnisko augstskolu studentiem). The oldest required text book was published in 1996;
- Exactly the same core literature for the course "Statistics" has been indicated as for the courses "Mathematics" and "Theory of Microeconomics";
- For the Latvian version of the courses "Ievads studijās un praktiskā uzņēmējdarbība", "Praktiskā uzņēmējdarbība", and "Projektu vadība: jaunu produktu izstrāde" only English sources of literature are available. For the Latvian version of the course "Biznesa komunikācija un ētika" all the core sources of literature are in English, just one source of literature on the additional readings list is in Latvian.

Another significant deficiency is the lack of distinctive course descriptions based on differences in study methodology for distance education. Although the activity plan for distance education mode of studies is provided at the end of the Annex 20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_MR\_ENG.pdf of SAR) and Annex 20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_MR\_LV.pdf of SAR), only the mechanical division of the topics and hours is presented. No justification for delivering particular topics as a video lecture or as a webinar is provided. No structure of distinctive assessment criteria is provided. Although the expert group got introduced to the high-quality sample video lectures during the site visit, no evidence regarding the existence of the full set of the videos and other study materials for all distance courses have been received.

The course mapping to the programme outcomes is carefully done and provides alignment between the courses and avoids possible duplication.

As much as it can be concluded from a short study of the final bachelor theses presented to the experts' panel, the theses are of appropriate quality and generally comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The structure and the content of the theses are supporting reaching the learning outcomes, the theses meet the research trends in the management field. Different research methods are applied, surveys/ questionnaires and personal interviews are among the most popular. Unfortunately, only theses in the Latvian language were available for review.

Content relevancy and compliance with aims of programme: The offer of study courses is well designed to meet basic programme essentials and research skills as evidenced by modules like Microeconomic Theory, Macroeconomic Theory, Mathematics, Introduction to Legal Theory, Introduction to Studies and Practical Entrepreneurship, Methodology of Economic Research, Business Communication and Ethics, Statistics, Fundamentals of Finance, Basics of Accounting, foreign languages. The offer of modules also aligns well with industry needs as the curriculum includes modules like Consumer Behaviour, Corporate Strategy and Policy, Marketing Communication Methods, International Advertising Market and its Development, Direct and Interactive Marketing, Advertising Design, Development and Management of International Brands. Personal development goals are addressed in modules like Leadership and stress management. The theses seem appropriate for the bachelor level and the study field. Considering the marks of the theses it appears that the quality of the theses has been going up (SAR, p. 226). Theses are often undertaken in collaboration with companies such as Maxima, Venden, Ogre municipality, Tele2. Placements are well organized, include national and international companies and organisations, and do fit with the aims of the programme. In the course "students placements" students connect with employers and professional organisations with the objective to analyse the students' competencies and to assist students with future employment opportunities. The relevancy of the courses is secured by the participation of employers in the programme quality council and by implementing suggestions provided in the employer survey.

2.2. Study implementation and facilitation methods are student-centered and teaching principles are taken into account. The HEI seems very accustomed to working with technology-enhanced learning tools such as flipped classrooms and e-learning. These modern learning tools facilitate engagement and interaction. All courses include a large variety of teaching methods and stimulate student-student and student-teacher interaction. Evaluation/assessment methods are appropriate and include safeguarding (turn-it-in; second reviewers) against possible fraud and plagiarism. The study process in this programme is organised according to a modular system, including lectures, seminars, practical classes, and independent work. There is an emphasis on independent work, which includes reading and analysing scientific literature, writing summaries and essays, preparing reports and projects, and preparing and presenting semester papers and group projects. According to the experts' opinion the differences in study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods for the distance education mode are not discovered in the accreditation materials.

2.3. Feedback from surveys and other evaluations is seriously considered. Considering a student response rate of 35% in the fall of 2017 and 20% in the spring of 2018 (SAR, p.228), improving the response rate might need some additional attention. That said, complementary to these surveys there is regular communication between students and programme staff where students have the opportunity to voice their opinion. Also, the use of best practices of other teachers has contributed to further improving the programme. Responses to surveys received from graduates and employers are overwhelmingly positive.

2.4. Students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities. Although the

numbers of outgoing and incoming students are relatively small, the students of the programme do seem to be aware of the opportunities and the process and procedures to go on a study abroad. In 18/19 20 students applied (larger numbers than in any of the prior years) but it is not clear how many actually did go on a study abroad. The programme offers a limited number of courses in English which limits the number of incoming students as an exchange. The expectation is that the newly developed Startup programme will help alleviate this challenge.

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

Courses are appropriately mapped to learning outcomes and are facilitated with the support of high-quality technology. This allows for the use of a wide variety of teaching tools and activities. The curriculum and manner of facilitating the lectures focus on the interaction between students and students as well as between students and teachers. Individual attention is praised by all students. The international component needs attention. At this time there are only limited courses facilitated in English within the programme and other forms of international experiences (including virtual opportunities and expanding the number of courses taught in English) that need to be developed to make it a truly international programme.

#### **Strengths:**

1. Good use of technology to support the facilitation of the lectures.
2. Mapping of the courses to the programme outcomes is well done.
3. Satisfied students and employers.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Clear confirmation of which courses can be taught in English is not provided.
2. Besides the few places of study abroad via Erasmus there are very few opportunities to support the international component of the programme.
3. No distinctive course descriptions are prepared for studies in English and in Latvian.
4. Some sources of the course literature are old. Some courses are lacking textbooks covering the essence of the course.
5. Lack of distinctive course descriptions based on differences in study methodology for distance education.

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

#### **Analysis**

3.1. Study, informative and technical provision by RSU, its library, and Business incubator are good and sufficient for implementing the study process in Latvian and also in English, as the majority of the databases and literature are available in the English language. The library very actively tries to provide necessary databases and the newest literature, also taking into account students' requests (SAR, p. 57). RSU pays a lot of attention to funding its library which could be assessed during the on-site visit, judging by the materials presented by the representative of the library. Study materials provided by RSU comply with the study aims and give student and teaching staff members the necessary tools for achieving the learning outcomes, research included for full and part-time studies on site. What comes to distance learning options of implementing the study programme for full-time distance learning and part-time extramural study distance education, only materials, which could be assessed were databases, and e-study environment, with lecture recordings, which although are outstanding, but not sufficient for fully implemented distance learning in both languages. According to experts' observation, RSU has responded to the external challenges created by Covid-19 and has created methodological and IT support structures and is in process of adaptation, but besides that,

the mentioned process hasn't been finished with full study material set for all intended versions of existing study programmes, as the preparation of the distance education materials is in the progress now. Judging from the trend, the study programme on average enrolls more than 40 students each study year (16\_pielik\_MR\_statistika\_engM.pdf, Annex of SAR), which is the biggest number of enrolled students per year from all study programmes in this field, keeping the overall student number in the programme at around 100 from whom all are paying tuition fee 2050 EUR per year (SAR, p. 44). The average cost per student per year is 1243 EUR (SAR, p. 45) which means that the study programme is sustainable in the long term.

Material resources in Liepāja branch, knowing the early stages of developing this study programme in Liepāja branch are more suited for medical education, which can be noted in the annex as well (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf, Annex of SAR). Besides the administrative support, classrooms, computer class, and library, experts cannot assess the study and informative resources as equal to the RSU library. There is currently no conducted market research in Liepāja considering the necessity of this study programme, and also no local teaching staff in this study programme which makes the risks for the implementation of this study programme implementation in Liepāja too big as of the present moment. Judging also by the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study field it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepāja branch." (SAR, p. 175). There is no evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant outputs so far.

3.2. Not applicable.

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

RSU has provided resources necessary for implementing high-level study processes and achieving the learning outcomes and study aims. It could be assessed that RSU pays a lot of attention to improving their material-technical provision for studies also outside the medical field. The library-provided resources are good and with a tendency to increase the number of subscribed databases. The study programme can be implemented in English as there are a lot of materials in English already in use while implementing this study programme in Latvian. In order to start implementing the distance learning studies, additional preparation and materials would be needed for this study programme, as for now, RSU lacks the full set of materials in both languages corresponding to distance learning methodology. The particular study programme is the most popular programme in the study field and seems to be financially sustainable. What comes to Liepāja branch and intended study programmes there, it is clear, that these study programmes are in a very early development stage and as the infrastructure is sufficient to implement them, available resources from the library are noticeably narrower than in Riga.

Strengths:

1. RSU pays attention to increasing the budget of their library, in order to provide more study materials.
2. Outstanding e-studies environment for on-site studies and remote study process.

Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

## Analysis

"As online video lectures are planned in the study process, the content of the programme is provided by the same teaching staff as in Riga, but many study courses also involve lecturers from Liepāja Branch, who deliver courses in Liepāja" (Annex 2 of SAR) and there were no data presented to experts about lecturers from Liepāja Branch who deliver courses in Liepāja, as explained by RSU representatives that it is still under development, in this report experts analyse only data about teaching staff in Riga branch.

4.1. 25 lecturers are involved in the programme. According to SAR (Annex 19.2) during the accreditation period, the composition of lecturers has changed because of a change of generations when lecturers retire, student feedback on the content and quality of the study course, an analysis of labour market trends and appropriate improvement (SAR, p. 232). SAR does not provide quantitative evidence of the above-mentioned changes. Standard 4.1 says: "Analysis and assessment of the changes to the composition of the teaching staff over the reporting period and their impact on the study quality institutions should provide measures about changes in the academic staff". There are no visible risks in the structure of the academic staff – the staff has adequate competencies linked with the delivered courses. (Annex 6.2, SAR, p. 233-235).

4.2. The programme has an academic profile. SAR provides here clear information about linking staff research experience with delivered programmes and courses (SAR, p. 233-235). Based on the SAR and observations collected during the visit, there were not identified any gaps in the composition of the academic staff from the perspective of legal requirements. Students recognize the high engagement of the teaching staff and they did not report any problems related to the teaching staff.

4.3. Not applicable.

4.4. There is a visible contribution of the academic staff in the research in the field of economy and business. The teaching staff is involved in research. It is also visible the international activeness of the staff (SAR, annex 6.4.). The obtained information is used in the study process. The interviews showed that the academic staff connection with the public and private sector is at a good level.

4.5. The mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and between the director of the programme and teaching staff was discussed during interviews and it is at a satisfactory level. The teaching staff confirmed that there is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in place based on regular meetings in DIBE.

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The qualification and research record of the academic staff is on a satisfactory level. It is a visible high engagement of the teaching staff. The collaboration of the academic staff is at a good level. For the purpose of SAR, there is a gap in providing quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period.

### Strengths:

1. Proper qualification and research record of the academic staff.
2. High engagement and student-focused approach of the academic staff.
3. Good mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and with the director of the programme.

### Weaknesses:

1. Lack of quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation



period.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "International Marketing and Advertising"

### 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:** Compliant to the legislation.

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:** RSU has no agreement in place with any other HEI in Latvia regarding the options to continue the studies at another higher education institution. Instead, the option to continue education in another study programme of the same field at RSU is granted.

(24-2\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_citu\_StP\_VANIP\_parakstits (2).pdf, Annex of SAR)

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 24-3 of SAR confirms that the institution guarantees compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the license of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the HEI (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

(24-3\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_zaudejumiem\_VANIP\_parakstits\_eng.pdf, Annex of SAR).

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:** Attached resumes confirm that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet regulations No. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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:** The compliance of the English proficiency level of the teaching staff is confirmed by Annex 24-5.

(24-5\_pielik\_Apliecin\_anglu\_val\_StV\_VANIP-p\_tulk\_eng.pdf, Annex of SAR)

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:**

- 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The teaching staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements (24\_7\_Apliecinajums\_ABSP\_SMR\_lv-lv-en.pdf, Annex of SAR).

- 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 of study agreement attached (24.8\_pielik\_Studiju\_lig\_eng.pdf, Annex of SAR) complies with Cabinet regulations No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

- 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:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The descriptions of the study courses are prepared in English and in Latvian. (20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_MR\_ENG.pdf, 20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_MR\_LV.pdf, Annexes of SAR)

Deficiencies in some course descriptions have been identified. Study methodology and evaluation of the results achieved for the distinct modes of studies (full time, part time, distance) are not differentiated and highlighted enough in the course descriptions. Experts believe that deficiencies in the course descriptions can and will be corrected easily and quickly, which may lead to raising the evaluation.

- 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:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

- 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received (24-9\_pielik\_SMR\_AIP\_atzinums\_eng.pdf, Annex of SAR)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard (17.1\_pielik\_Atbilstiba-izglitiba-standartam\_BSP\_MR\_eng.pdf, Annex of SAR)

- 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:**

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:** Each member of the teaching staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years or a five-year practical work experience (6.2\_pielik\_CV\_eng.pdf; 6.4\_pielik\_Publikacijas\_uzlabots\_lv (4).pdf; Annex 6.5 of SAR).

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The evaluation is awarded assuming that the course descriptions can and will be corrected easily and quickly, which may lead to raising the overall evaluation.

All other key points, which facilitate the assessment of the compliance of the study programme are fully compliant.

## 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:** The learning outcome achievement is confirmed by the availability of financing (tuition), excellent study and work infrastructure, access to study materials, and communication via Moodle platform, the library at Riga campus. A poor collection of books in the study field is currently available in the Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

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:** The local and visiting academic staff of Riga campus comply with the regulatory requirements. No local academic staff is identified at Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts

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:**

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The evaluation of the study provision, scientific support, 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, as well as the compliance of the qualification of the teaching 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 is provided for the existing modes of the study programme delivered in Riga.

The experts visited the Liepaja branch of RSU, however only premises, administrative support, and library were subject of evaluation in Liepaja. The description of the material and technical provision at RSU Liepāja Branch (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf, Annex of SAR) gives valuable insight into operations of the Liepaja branch (although it should be noted that the information relevant to medical studies doesn't provide value to the study field under evaluation). No local faculty and no local academic support were identified in Liepaja yet. No market research has been conducted either. Although RSU has technical possibilities and the academic capacity (faculty) to run courses remotely from Riga, and technically the study programme can be offered not only in Riga, the experts identified that the preparatory actions regarding starting studies particularly at the Liepaja branch have not been completed at the moment. It is clearly indicated in the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study field it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepaja branch." (SAR, p. 175) The experts didn't get any evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant outputs so far. The meeting with municipality and business representatives in Liepaja confirmed that no concrete discussions have been conducted and no particular plan has been produced for justification of launching the study programme in Liepaja.

#### Strengths:

1. The study programme is required by the labor market.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.
2. Study programmes for the Liepāja branch are in very early development stages, and there are no local teaching staff members for the study field yet.

### Evaluation of the study programme "International Marketing and Advertising"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "International Marketing and Advertising"

#### Short-term recommendations

Rephrase some of the learning outcomes to make them better measurable

(18-1\_pielik\_StK\_StR\_kartejums\_MR\_eng.pdf. and 18-1\_pielik\_StK\_StR\_kartejums\_MR\_lv.pdf).

Eliminate inconsistency in the formulations of the degree awarded in the SAR and Annexes.

Revise and update literature for the study courses. Consider replacing the outdated literature. Add the missing core textbooks covering the essence of the course.

Make adjustments to the study methodology and didactics for the distance education.

#### Long-term recommendations

Increase the international orientation of the programme by allowing for additional international/global components in the programme and including international/global more in the learning outcomes.

Before opening other variations of implementing the study programme RSU should have provided all necessary materials according to the methodology for the form of studies and languages of the implementation before enrolling the students.

Increase the number of courses taught in English.

Market research in order to justify the necessity of opening this study programme in Liepāja and after that dealing with the development of the study programme while attracting teaching staff members for Liepāja branch.

Running quantitative analysis equipped with measures about changes in the academic staff.

## **II. "International Business and Sustainable Economy" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "International Business and Sustainable Economy" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

Study programme name and degree: As described in the SAR, lawfully, the title of the degree to be obtained corresponds to the Cabinet Regulation No. 322 on the Classification of Education in Latvia: Management and Administration. Graduates of the study programme "International Business and Sustainable Economy" are granted Bachelor's degree of Social Sciences in Management and Administration. (24-1\_pielik\_SBIE\_diploma\_paraugs\_ENG.pdf and 24-1\_pielik\_SBIE\_diploma\_paraugs\_LV.pdf). The programme offers 120 CP and 180 ECTS. It is available in full-time (3 years and 0 months) and part-time (3 years and 6 months) mode. It is available in English and Latvian. At the moment it is taught only in Latvian.

Mission, aims/programme objectives/outcomes:

The mission (aim) of the programme is described as: To prepare highly qualified specialists (in business and economics) with in-depth knowledge in matters of international business and sustainable economic growth. The study programme prepares future heads of companies, who are competitive in the international labour market and business, are capable to work successfully and reach high work results in international projects, in widely known international companies, as well as in state and European Union institutions. The underlined words make this mission statement a stretch for a bachelor-level programme, resulting in a disconnect between the mission statement and the learning outcomes. A number of the learning outcomes are described in such a way that they are difficult to measure, for example learning outcome 12: Independently obtains, selects, analyses, and uses information on current issues of a sustainable economy and business in the international business environment. 13: Participates in the development of the international business environment in accordance with the principles of a sustainable economy. Others are well described but are, without specific rubrics, subjective (Learning outcome 11: Communicates freely in the international and intercultural environment in a foreign language, being aware of and respecting the specifics of foreign languages and cultures). Learning outcome 4: "Independently plans and organises one's study process, plans (in the long and short term) the time required to achieve the aim of the study process and the fulfillment of objective" is not a learning goal but a means to the end.

Admission requirements:

The programme does have strict requirements for admission: secondary education, English language skills and the results of the CE in mathematics. The basic admission requirements for International applicants, when the programme starts admitting English-speaking students, will be – secondary education, English, mathematics, which will be tested in accordance with the recognition and validation; and international students will have to submit a letter of motivation and two letters of recommendation. These in turn seem in alignment with the Bachelor's degree level and student expectations.

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

Interrelation between the name of the programme, degree, aims, objectives, and admission requirements: Objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements seem to be interrelated and aligned. Reviewing the learning outcomes to make them less subjective and better measurable is recommended.

Strengths:

1. Objectives and admission requirements are in alignment.

Weaknesses:

1. The mission statement is not in alignment with the learning outcomes and admission requirements.
2. All though the learning outcomes (LO) are described in measurable language, the ability to actually measure the outcomes is in some cases questionable due to subjective wording (and no rubrics) or situational description (for example LO 13: Participates in the development of the international business environment in accordance with the principles of the sustainable economy).

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. Description of the study courses/module and final thesis: The descriptions of study courses and placements are presented in English (20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_SBTM\_ENG (1).pdf, Annex of SAR) and in Latvian (20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_SBIE\_LV (1).pdf, Annex of SAR).

The courses addressing sustainability seem underrepresented. The mapping of the learning outcomes to the courses is in some cases questionable. For instance Learning goal 5 (analyses changing international business situations and makes creative competent decisions) is mapped to, among others, introductions to studies and practical entrepreneurship, math, fundamentals of finance, and statistics.

Course descriptions provide a basic understanding of the course content and expectations for the full and the part-time versions of the study programme.

The following deficiencies in the course descriptions have been identified:

- For the Latvian version of the course “Starptautiskais mārketingš” (SBUEK\_163) all the core sources of literature are in English, just one source of literature on the additional readings list is in Latvian;
- For the Latvian version of the course “Procesu vadība ilgtspējīgai uzņēmējdarbībai” (SBUEK\_126) all the core sources of literature are in English, one source of literature on the additional readings list is in Russian;

- For the Latvian version of the courses “Globālā biznesa politiskā un tiesiskā vide” (SBUEK\_114) and “Darba resursu menedžments starptautiskajā biznesā” (SBUEK\_118) “Starptautiskās finanšu attiecības un Eiropas Monetārā savienība” (SBUEK\_076) all the sources of literature are in English.

Another significant deficiency is the lack of distinctive course descriptions based on differences in study methodology for distance education. Although the activity plan for distance education mode of studies is provided at the end of the study course descriptions, only the mechanical division of the topics and hours is presented. No justification for delivering particular topics as a video lecture or as a webinar is provided. No structure of distinctive assessment criteria is provided. Although the expert team got introduced to the high-quality sample video lectures during the site visit, no evidence regarding the existence of the full set of the videos and other study materials for all distance courses have been received.

As much as it can be identified from a short study of the final bachelor theses presented to the experts’ panel it can be concluded that the theses are of appropriate quality and generally comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The structure and the content of the theses are supporting reaching the learning outcomes, the theses meet the research trends in the management field. Different research methods are applied, surveys/ questionnaires and personal interviews are among the most popular. Unfortunately, only theses in the Latvian language were available for review.

Content relevancy and compliance with aims of programme: The relevancy of the content and compliance with the learning outcomes (not the mission of the programme) is safeguarded by the regular involvement of industry representatives (via surveys and participation in the council study field). The lecturers meet regularly to discuss course mapping to learning outcomes. This prevents overlap and ensures alignment. A review of annex 17.1 shows that the Study Programme “International Business and Sustainable Economy” complies with the National Educational Standard Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 240 “Regulations on the National Standard of Academic Education” of 13 May 2014.

2.2. Study implementation and facilitation methods are student-centered and teaching principles are taken into account. As far as the face-to-face courses are concerned, they include a large variety of teaching methods and stimulate student-student and student-teacher interaction. The programme seems very accustomed to working with technology-enhanced learning tools such as flipped classrooms and e-learning. These modern learning tools facilitate engagement and interaction. Evaluation/assessment methods are appropriate and include safeguarding (turn-it-in; second reviewers) against possible fraud and plagiarism. The study process in this programme is organised according to a modular system, including lectures, seminars, practical classes, and independent work. There is an emphasis on independent work, which includes reading and analysing scientific literature, writing summaries and essays, preparing reports and projects, and preparing and presenting semester papers and group projects. At the end of the second students complete a placement project.

2.3. Feedback from surveys and other evaluations is seriously considered: the responses to the surveys (students, (placement) employers) are used to improve the quality of the courses and the overall programme. Especially where it relates to the overlap of study content or order of courses. In this respect, it is good to mention the quality council of study field that evaluates the programme on a regular basis and also takes on board student recommendations and comments. Graduate surveys indicate that the needed literature was not always available and that there was some overlapping content. These same graduates did mark as positive the interesting and modern content and the

presentation of real-life examples.

2.4. Students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities: There does not seem to be a very clear internationalization strategy at the programme level. Students have the opportunity to study abroad, however, in 2019 only 3 students used this opportunity.

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

Course descriptions are well done, however, the match between learning outcomes and mapping to courses is not always clear when reading course title and description. There does not seem to be a very proactive internationalisation strategy (only three students did a study abroad in 2019. Data for other years is not available). The programme uses a variety of evaluation/assessment methods and the review process seems well organised and of sufficient quality. Mapping of learning outcomes to appropriate courses does need review.

Strengths:

1. Positive feedback from employers, graduates, and students.

Weaknesses:

1. Learning outcomes are not always clear and measurable and in some cases difficult to see the connection between learning outcomes and mapped courses.
2. Not having a proactive internationalisation strategy.
3. Deficiencies in the course descriptions (literature) have been identified. Distinctive course descriptions based on differences in study methodology for distance education have not been prepared yet.

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

#### **Analysis**

3.1. Study, informative and technical provision by RSU, its library, and Business incubator are good and sufficient for implementing the study process in Latvian and also in English, as the majority of the databases and literature are available in the English language. The library very actively tries to provide necessary databases and the newest literature, also taking into account students' requests (SAR, p. 57). RSU pays a lot of attention to funding its library which could be assessed during the on-site visit, judging by the materials shown by the representative of the library. Study materials provided by RSU comply with the study aims and give student and teaching staff members the necessary tools for achieving the learning outcomes, research included for full and part-time studies on site. What comes to distance learning options of implementing the study programme for full-time distance learning and part-time extramural study distance education, only materials, which could be assessed were databases, and e-study environment, with lecture recordings, which although are outstanding, but not sufficient for fully implemented distance learning in both languages. According to experts' observation, RSU has responded to the external challenges created by Covid-19 and has created methodological and IT support structures and is in process of adaptation, but besides that, the mentioned process hasn't been finished with full study material complexes for all intended versions of existing study programmes, as the preparation of the distance education materials is in the progress now.

The study programme on average enrolls around 20 students each study year, keeping the overall student number in the programme at around 40-50 (16\_pielik\_SBIE\_statistika\_engM.pdf, Annex of SAR) from whom all are paying tuition fee 2050 EUR per year (SAR, p. 44). Therefore it must be noted that the number of students in this programme shows a growing trend, which could indicate



possible long-term increase in student intake in the programme. The average cost per student per year is 1533 EUR (SAR, p. 45) which makes the costs and revenue seem quite close.

Material resources in Liepāja branch, knowing the early stages of developing this study programme in Liepāja branch are more suited for medical education, which can be noted in the annex as well (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf, Annex of SAR). Besides the administrative support, classrooms, computer class, and library, experts cannot assess the study and informative resources as equal to the RSU library. There is currently no market research conducted in Liepāja considering the demand for this study programme which makes the risks for the launching of this study programme implementation in Liepāja too big as of the present moment. Judging also by the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study field it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepāja branch." (SAR, p. 175). There is no evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant outputs so far.

3.2. Not applicable.

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

RSU has provided resources necessary for implementing high-level study processes and achieving the learning outcomes and study aims. It could be assessed that RSU pays a lot of attention to improving their material-technical provision for studies outside the medical field. The library-provided resources are good and with a tendency to increase the number of subscribed databases. The study programme can be implemented in English as there are a lot of materials in English already in use while implementing this study programme in Latvian. There could be problems with implementing the distance learning options at this moment for this study programme, as for now, RSU lacks the full set of materials in both languages corresponding to distance learning methodology. Study programme costs and revenue per student seem quite close, but it should be mentioned that the number of enrolled students has a tendency to grow. What comes to Liepāja branch and intended study programmes there, it is clear, that these study programmes are in a very early development stage and as the infrastructure is sufficient to implement them, available resources from the library are noticeably narrower than in Riga.

Strengths:

1. RSU pays attention to increasing the budget of their library, in order to provide more study materials.
2. Outstanding e-studies environment for on-site studies and remote study process.

Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

"As online video lectures are planned in the study process, the content of the programme is provided by the same teaching staff as in Riga, but many study courses also involve lecturers from Liepāja Branch, who deliver courses in Liepāja" (Annex 2 of SAR) and there were no data presented to experts about lecturers from Liepāja Branch who deliver courses in Liepāja, as explained by RSU representatives that it is still under development, in this report experts analyse only data about

teaching staff in Riga branch.

4.1. 45 lecturers are involved in the programme (Annex 19.2 of SAR). According to SAR (p. 322) during the accreditation period, the main change was to equip the academic staff with the knowledge of English so the programme could be delivered in English. Standard 4.1 says: "Analysis and assessment of the changes to the composition of the teaching staff over the reporting period and their impact on the study quality institutions should provide measures about changes in the academic staff". SAR does not provide any measures (SAR, p. 322). There are no visible risks in the structure of the academic staff – the staff has adequate competencies linked with the delivered courses. (Annex 6.2, Annex 19.2 of SAR).

4.2. The programme has an academic profile. SAR provides here clear information about linking staff research experience with delivered programme and courses (SAR, p. 323). Based on the SAR and observations collected during the visit, there were not identified any gaps in the composition of the academic staff from the perspective of legal requirements. Students recognize the high engagement of the teaching staff and they did not report any problems related to the teaching staff.

4.3. Not applicable.

4.4. There is a visible contribution of the academic staff in the research in the field of economy and business. The teaching staff is involved in research. It is also visible the international activeness of the staff (Annex 6.4. of SAR). The obtained information is used in the study process. The interviews showed that the academic staff connection with the public and private sector is at a good level.

4.5. The mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and between the director of the programme and teaching staff was discussed during interviews and it is at a satisfactory level. The teaching staff confirmed that a mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members is in place based on regular meetings.

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

The qualification and research record of the academic staff is on a satisfactory level. It is a visible high engagement of the teaching staff. The collaboration of the academic staff is at a good level. For the purpose of SAR, there is a gap in providing quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period.

Strengths:

1. Proper qualification and research record of the academic staff.
2. High engagement and student-focused approach of the academic staff.
3. Good mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and with the director of the programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "International Business and Sustainable Economy"**

### **Requirements**

- 1 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:** Compliant to the legislation.
- 2 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:** RSU has no agreement in place with any other HEI in Latvia regarding the options to continue the studies at another higher education institution. Instead, the option to continue education in another study programme of the same direction at RSU is granted.  
(24-2\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_citu\_StP\_VANIP\_parakstits (2).pdf)
- 3 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 24-3 confirms that the institution guarantees compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the license 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.  
(24-3\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_zaudejumiem\_VANIP\_parakstits\_eng.pdf)
- 4 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:** The attached resumes confirm that state language proficiency is compliant with regulations Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi"
- 5 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:** The compliance of English proficiency level of the teaching staff is confirmed by Annex 24-5.  
(24-5\_pielik\_Apliecin\_anglu\_val\_StV\_VANIP-p\_tulk\_eng.pdf)
- 6 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:**
- 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:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** The teaching staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements (24.7\_Apliecinajums\_ABSP\_SBIE-lv-en.pdf)

- 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 of study agreement attached (24.8\_pielik\_Studiju\_lig\_eng.pdf) complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi"
- 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 and the study materials are prepared.
- 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:** Not relevant  
**Justification:**
- 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:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** The relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received (24-9\_pielik\_SBIE\_AIP\_atzinums\_eng.pdf)
- 12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard (17.1\_pielik\_Valsts\_standarts\_SBIE\_eng\_.pdf)
- 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:**
- 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:** All members of the teaching staff has either publication published in reviewed editions within the last six years or a five-year practical work experience (6.2\_pielik\_CV\_eng.pdf; 6.4\_pielik\_Publikacijas\_uzlabots\_lv (4).pdf; Annex 6.5)
- 15 P5 - Overall rating  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** The key points, which facilitate the assessment of the compliance of the study programme are fully compliant.

## 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:** The learning outcome achievement is confirmed by the availability of financing (tuition), excellent study and work infrastructure, access to study materials, and communication via Moodle platform, the library at the Riga campus. A poor collection of books in the study field is available on the Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

- 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:** The local and visiting academic staff of the Riga campus comply with the regulatory requirements. No local academic staff is identified at the Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

- 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:**

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The evaluation of the study provision, scientific support, 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, as well as the compliance of the qualification of the teaching 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 is provided for the existing modes of the study programme delivered in Riga.

The experts visited the Liepaja branch of RSU, however only premises, administrative support and library were subject of evaluation in Liepaja. The description of the material and technical provision at RSU Liepāja Branch (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf) gives valuable insight into the operations of the Liepaja branch (although it should be noted that the information relevant to medical studies doesn't provide value to the study field under evaluation). No local faculty and no local academic support were identified in Liepaja yet. No market research has been conducted either. Although RSU has technical possibilities and the academic capacity (faculty) to run courses remotely from Riga, and technically the study programme can be offered not only in Riga, the experts identified that the preparatory actions regarding starting studies particularly at the Liepaja branch have not been completed at the moment. It is clearly indicated in the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study field it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepaja branch." (p. 175, SAR) The experts didn't get any evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant output so far. The meeting with the municipality and business representatives in Liepaja confirmed that no concrete discussions have been conducted and no particular plan has been produced for justification of launching the study programme in Liepaja.

Strengths:

1. The programme graduates are demanded in the market.

Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.

2. Study programmes for the Liepāja branch are in very early development stages, and there are no local teaching staff members from the study field yet.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "International Business and Sustainable Economy"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "International Business and Sustainable Economy"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

Reconsidering the name of the programme is advised to better position the programme among its competitors and promote international recognition.

The mission statement of the programme should be reconsidered, as well to establish a closer alignment between the anticipated target population and admission requirements as well as the learning outcomes.

### **Long-term recommendations**

Before opening other variations of implementing the study programme RSU should have provided all necessary materials according to the methodology for the form of studies and languages of the implementation.

Market research in order to conclude the necessity of opening this study programme in Liepāja and after that dealing with the development of the study programme while attracting teaching staff members for Liepāja branch.

Running quantitative analysis equipped with measures about changes in the academic staff.

Reviewing the learning outcomes to make them less subjective and better measurable is recommended.

Consider possibility to strengthen the programme by extra study courses addressing sustainability.

Revise and improve the mapping of the learning outcomes to the courses.

Revise the literature sources according to the study language.

## **II. "International Business and Start-up Entrepreneurship" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "International Business and Start-up Entrepreneurship" ASSESSMENT**

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

## Analysis

Study programme name and a degree:

This is a new programme, that received its license in April 2020 and builds upon the programme startup entrepreneurship that will be closed as of September 2021, there is not much history on the new programme. 1st-year students will follow the new programme started in September 2020, 2nd-year students complete the programme in a sub-programme of the IBSE, and 3rd-year students complete the old programme. Considering this new programme (IBSE), the title of the degree to be obtained corresponds to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 on the classification of education in Latvia: Management and administration. However, Bachelor's Degree of Social Sciences in Economics and Business Administration, as suggested in the SAR, corresponds more precisely to the study programme and the relevant science sector: entrepreneurship and the economy, with an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies in the aspects of international business and economics with a specialisation in international business and start-ups. The diploma supplement further specifies the degree and establishes the alignment with the aim of the programme and the learning outcomes. The programme offers 120 CP (180 ECTS). It is available in full-time (3 years) and part-time (3 years and 6 months) mode and is available in English and Latvian.

Mission, aims/programmes objectives/outcomes:

The mission (aim) of the programme is "to prepare highly qualified and creative specialists in economics and management of international business and start-up entrepreneurship". Focus areas of the programme are the interdisciplinary nature of the study programme, international business management, and sustainable economy and economic growth. As described in annex 18-1\_pielik\_Kartesana\_IBSE\_lv-eng (2).pdf, the programme has 11 learning outcomes that show a balanced representation of outcomes addressing knowledge, competencies, and skills. The mapping of the learning outcomes to the appropriate EQF level along with the mapping of the study courses to the learning outcomes ensures appropriate content coverage at the appropriate level and alignment of course content. The objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme have been formed so as to gradually develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies of students from the basic level immediately after secondary school.

Admissions requirements:

Admission requirements have been defined in accordance with regulations of the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers. It includes the requirements of secondary education, knowledge of English, and mathematics. These requirements are appropriate for a Bachelor's degree of this kind. As the programme is very new, success and drop-out rates as indicators of appropriate admission requirements are not available yet.

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The name of the degree may be correct according to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, a more appropriate name, as suggested in the SAR would help the programme increase its competitive position and global recognition. The mission of the programme is appropriate and aligns well with the learning outcomes and admission requirements.

Strengths:

1. Well-defined mission that aligns with the learning outcomes and admission requirements.

Weaknesses:

1. The official programme name along with the recognition on the diploma is not in alignment with

the content and aim of the programme.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. Description of study courses/module and final thesis: The programme takes place in full-time regular format (120 CP (180 ECTS) in 6 semesters) in English and in accordance with the epidemiological situation and restrictions imposed by the government, mainly online. It is anticipated that the programme will be offered part-time (7 semesters) and as a distance-based programme over three years. Study courses, placement, and thesis are clearly described and well-aligned with the learning outcomes. Course content is relevant. There is heavy emphasis on learning languages in the study programme. Students have the option to take up to 20% of the course content in language credits. Specialisations (start-up entrepreneurship specialisation interdisciplinary basic module; social entrepreneurship specialisation module; health economics and entrepreneurship specialisation module; start-up management specialisation module) appear appropriate and fitting with the larger university and the study field. The report indicates that many different stakeholders were involved with the design of the programme. The option of combining the thesis topic with industry employers, the career centre and the RSU business incubator, strengthens cooperation with the labour market and practicality of studies and ensures also the academic value of the Bachelor's theses.

There are certain deficiencies in the course descriptions, for instance, for the Latvian version of the course "Jaunuzņēmumu patenti" all the sources of literature are in English. On another hand, quite a lot of literature in Latvian are provided for the English versions of the study courses, e.g. "Business Research Methodology", "Applied Microeconomics and Mathematics in Business".

The activity plan for distance education mode of studies is provided at the end of the study course descriptions. Although the expert team got introduced to the high-quality sample video lectures during the site visit, no evidence regarding the existence of the full set of the videos and other study materials for all distance courses has been received.

Content relevancy and compliance with aims of the programme: Employers and other industry stakeholders are in regular contact with the programme, either through involvement in committees and/or involvement as a guest lecturer. The programme is new and the content of the programme was developed while taking into account experiences and feedback of the closed startup entrepreneurship programme.

2.2. Study implementation and facilitation methods are student-centered and teaching principles are taken into account. The courses include a large variety of teaching methods and stimulate student-student and student-teacher interaction (interactive lectures, practical interactive classes, student visits, visiting seminars, and student independent work). Team teaching is used to provide additional content, inclusive knowledge transfer, and link several themes within a single study course. Evaluation/assessment methods (as described in the report) seem appropriate and safeguarding against possible fraud and plagiarism has been built in.

2.3. Feedback from surveys and other evaluations is seriously considered: The panel was only partially able to review this as the first group of students did not start until September 2020 and there have not been many feedback opportunities as of yet. From the few surveys and interviews held with stakeholders, it is clear that the stakeholders feel that there is a good structure of the course content, course content has market relevancy and especially the interdisciplinary nature of the programme is received very well. Suggestions of the RSU Student Union, discussions among



teachers, and the results of surveys of students in study programmes of the Department of International Business and Economics in academic years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019, as well as recommendations of foreign expert, have been used in the design of the IBSE programme and resulted for instance in the implementation of "Introduction to the Studies".

Study literature is not always aligned with the study language. Literature in Latvian language is offered for the English versions of the study courses. For instance, the course "Praktiskā uzņēmējdarbība" in Latvian has literature in English only, the course "Lietišķā mikroekonomika un matemātika biznesā" has only English textbook in Microeconomics. Some English versions of the study courses have literature in Latvian language.

2.4. Students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities: As students in the programme have just recently started this cannot be evaluated at this time. The programme does, however, expect that the options for study abroad for all social science programmes will increase because of the more international character of this programme and the fact that the courses are taught in English. In addition to creating incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, the course Business and Corporate Governance / International Experience-I organises a study visit to Brussels. During this week students participate in expert briefings of business institutions, research institutions, international organisations and EU management institutions together with students from Switzerland, Belgium, and Germany. Language courses offered by the RSU language center in collaboration with visiting university lecturers from Switzerland and India. During the course, students develop knowledge, skills, and understanding of intercultural relations in international business, including in the use of professional language.

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

Because of very active business and industry involvement, the market relevancy of the courses is ensured. The programme offers many opportunities for international exposure and involvement. Although it is understood that in a programme like this, learning foreign languages is appropriate, the option of taking up to 20% of the course credits in language courses might need to be capped at a lower percentage. Through its team teaching, the involvement of the incubator, and many opportunities for visiting lecturers the programme is dynamic, forward-looking, and rich in content. The facilitation of the courses offers many opportunities for engagement between students and between students and lecturers. Course content (including specialisations) seems rich, relevant, and well structured and equally addresses the domains of skills, competencies, and knowledge at the appropriate level (EFQ 6). The programme offers 4 specialisations and although this is a new programme and the expectation is that the number of students will grow, offering four specialisations for such a small programme seems too many.

Strengths:

1. Course content is strong and well matched with specialisations and aim of the programme.
2. Strong involvement of the business community.

Weaknesses:

1. Too few students for the number of specialisations offered.
2. High percentage of course credits in language courses.

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

#### **Analysis**

3.1. Study, informative and technical provision by RSU, its library, and Business incubator are good

and sufficient for implementing the study process in Latvian and also in English, as the majority of the databases and literature are available in the English language. The programme is implemented in English at the moment, therefore, it is possible to organise the study process in Latvian as well, if there is a necessity. The library very actively tries to provide necessary databases and the newest literature, also taking in account students' requests (SAR, p. 57). RSU pays a lot of attention to funding its library which could be assessed during the on-site visit, judging by the materials shown by the representative of the library. Study materials provided by RSU comply with the study aims and give student and teaching staff members the necessary tools for achieving the learning outcomes, research included for full and part-time studies on site. What comes to distance learning options of implementing the study programme for full-time distance learning and part-time extramural study distance education, only materials, which could be assessed were databases, and e-study environment, with lecture recordings, which although are outstanding, but not sufficient for fully implemented distance learning in both languages. According to experts' observation, RSU has responded to the external challenges created by Covid-19 and has created methodological and IT support structures and is in process of adaptation, but besides that, the mentioned process hasn't been finished with full study material complexes for all intended versions of existing study programmes, as the preparation of the distance education materials is in the progress now.

The particular study programme is new and the planned number of students enrolled each year is relatively small (16\_pielik\_SUV\_statistika\_engM.pdf). As the study programme is implemented in English the tuition fee is 2800 EUR per year (SAR, p. 44). The average cost per student per year is 1183 EUR (SAR, p. 45) which means that the study programme would be having a proportionally big income compared to other RSU study programmes in this field. Theoretically study programmes would be sustainable in the long term, if there will be interest from the students.

Material resources in Liepāja branch, knowing the early stages of developing this study programme in Liepāja branch are more suited for medical education, which can be noted in the annex as well (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf, Annex of SAR). Besides the administrative support, classrooms, computer class, and library, experts cannot assess the study and informative resources as equal to the RSU library. There is currently no market research conducted in Liepāja considering the demand for this study programme which makes the risks for the launching of this study programme implementation in Liepāja too big as of the present moment. Judging also by the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study field it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepaja branch." (p. 175, SAR). There is no evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant outputs so far.

3.2. Not applicable.

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

RSU has provided resources necessary for implementing high-level study processes and achieving the learning outcomes and study aims. It could be assessed that RSU pays a lot of attention to improving their material-technical provision for studies outside the medical field. The library-provided resources are good and with a tendency to increase the number of subscribed databases. The study programme is implemented in English as there are a lot of materials in English already in use. As RSU also applied this programme to be assessed also for Latvian study language, technically it would be possible. There could be problems with implementing the distance learning options at this moment for this study programme, as for now, RSU lacks the full set of materials in both languages corresponding to distance learning methodology. A particular study programme is new and it will take time to see how popular it will become. Only then it would be possible to make

further conclusions on this matter. What comes to Liepāja branch and intended study programmes there, it is clear, that these study programmes are in a very early development stage and as the infrastructure is sufficient to implement them, available resources from the library are noticeably narrower than in Riga.

**Strengths:**

1. RSU pays attention to increasing the budget of their library, in order to provide more study materials.
2. Outstanding e-studies environment for on-site studies and remote study process.

**Weaknesses:**

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

"As online video lectures are planned in the study process, the content of the programme is provided by the same teaching staff as in Riga, but many study courses also involve lecturers from Liepāja Branch, who deliver courses in Liepāja" (Annex 2 of SAR) and there were no data presented to experts about lecturers from Liepāja Branch who deliver courses in Liepāja, as explained by RSU representatives that it is still under development, in this report experts analyse only data about teaching staff in Riga branch.

4.1. 34 lecturers are involved in the programme (Annex 19.2). According to SAR (p. 192), the main changes were new academic staff involved in the programme - SAR lists 4 names and defense of doctoral dissertations by "many new lecturers" (SAR, p. 192). According to the standard, institutions should provide measures about changes in the academic staff. SAR does not provide any measures (SAR, p. 192). There are no visible risks in the structure of the academic staff - the staff has adequate competencies linked with the delivered courses. (Annex 6.2, Annex 19.2).

4.2. The programme has an academic profile. SAR provides here clear information about linking staff research experience with delivered programmes and courses (SAR, p. 193). Based on the SAR and observations collected during the visit, there were not identified any gaps in the composition of the academic staff from the perspective of legal requirements. Students recognize the high engagement of the teaching staff and they did not report any problems related to the teaching staff.

4.3. Not applicable.

4.4. There is a visible contribution of the academic staff in the research in the field of economy and business. The teaching staff is involved in research. It is also visible the international activeness of the staff (Annex 6.4.). Many courses are delivered by 2 teachers one representing academia and the second one with a more practical background. The information obtained in business is used in the study process. The interviews showed that the academic staff connection with the public and private sector is at a good level.

4.5. The mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and between the director of the programme and teaching staff was discussed during interviews and it is at a satisfactory level. The teaching staff confirmed that it is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in place based on regular meetings in DIBE.

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The qualification and research record of the academic staff is on a satisfactory level. It is a visible high engagement of the teaching staff. The collaboration of the academic staff is at a good level. For the purpose of SAR, there is a gap in providing quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period.

Strengths:

1. Proper qualification and research record of the academic staff.
2. High engagement and student-focused approach of the academic staff.
3. Good mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and with the director of the programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "International Business and Start-up Entrepreneurship"

### 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:** The diploma to be issued complies with the procedure.

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:** RSU has no agreement in place with any other HEI in Latvia regarding the options to continue the studies at another higher education institution. Instead, the option to continue education in another study programme of the same field at RSU is granted.

(24-2\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_citu\_StP\_VANIP\_eng.pdf)

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 24-3 confirms that the institution guarantees compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

(24-3\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_zaudejumiem\_VANIP\_parakstits\_eng.pdf)

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:** The attached resumes confirm that state language proficiency is compliant with regulations Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi"

- 5 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:** The compliance of English proficiency level of the teaching staff is confirmed by Annex 24-5.

(24-5\_pielik\_Apliecin\_anglu\_val\_StV\_VANIP-p\_tulk\_eng.pdf)

- 6 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:**

- 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The teaching staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements (24.7\_Apliecinajums\_ABSP\_IBSE-lv-en.pdf)

- 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 of study agreement attached (24.8\_pielik\_Studiju\_lig\_eng.pdf) complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi"

- 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:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials are prepared in English and in Latvian (20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_IBSE\_ENG.pdf; 20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_IBSE\_LV.pdf)

Certain deficiencies in the course descriptions have been identified. Literature should be assigned according to the language of tuition.

- 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:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

- 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received.  
(24-9\_pielik\_AIP\_atzinums\_IBSE\_eng.pdf)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard  
(17.1\_pielik\_Valsts\_standarts\_SBIE\_eng\_.pdf)

- 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:**

- 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:** Almost all members of the teaching staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years or a five-year practical work experience  
(6.2\_pielik\_CV\_eng.pdf; 6.4\_pielik\_Publikacijas\_uzlabots\_lv (4).pdf; Annex 6.5)

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Experts believe that that deficiencies in the course descriptions can and will be corrected easily and quickly which may lead to raising the overall evaluation.

All other key points, which facilitate the assessment of the compliance of the study programme are fully compliant.

## 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:** The learning outcome achievement is confirmed by the availability of financing (tuition), excellent study and work infrastructure, access to study materials, and communication via Moodle platform, the library at the Riga campus. A poor collection of books in the study field is available on the Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

- 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:** The local and visiting academic staff of the Riga campus comply with the regulatory requirements. No local academic staff is identified at the Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

- 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:**

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

The evaluation of the study provision, scientific support, 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, as well as the compliance of the qualification of the teaching 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 is provided for the existing modes of the study programme delivered in Riga.

The experts visited the Liepaja branch of RSU, however only premises, administrative support, and library were subject of evaluation in Liepaja. The description of the material and technical provision at RSU Liepāja Branch (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf) gives valuable insight into the operations of the Liepaja branch (although it should be noted that the information relevant to medical studies doesn't provide value to the study field under evaluation). No local faculty and no local academic support were identified in Liepaja yet. No market research has been conducted either. Although RSU has technical possibilities and the academic capacity (faculty) to run courses remotely from Riga, and technically the study programme can be offered not only in Riga, the experts identified that the preparatory actions regarding starting studies particularly at the Liepaja branch have not been completed at the moment. It is clearly indicated in the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study direction it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepaja branch." (p. 175, SAR) The experts didn't get any evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant outputs so far. The meeting with the municipality and business representatives in Liepaja confirmed that no concrete discussions have been conducted and no particular plan has been produced for justification of launching the study programme in Liepaja.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The study programme is relevant to the latest trends and needs of economic development.
2. Good linkage between theory and practice.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. The information relevant to medical studies doesn't provide value to the study field under evaluation.
2. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.
3. Study programmes for the Liepāja branch are in very early development stages, and there are no local teaching staff members from the study field yet.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "International Business and Start-up Entrepreneurship"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "International Business and Start-up Entrepreneurship"**

## Short-term recommendations

Align the formulations of the degree awarded in the accreditation documents.

## Long-term recommendations

Increase the number of students or decrease the number of specialisations. At this time the number of students seems too few for the number of specialisations.

Running quantitative analysis equipped with measures about changes in the academic staff.

Reconsider the number of course credits in language courses. A student now has the option to graduate with 20% of total course credits in language credits.

Before opening other variations of implementing the study programme RSU should have provided all necessary materials according to the methodology for the form of studies and languages of the implementation before enrolling the students.

Market research in order to conclude the necessity of opening this study programme in Liepāja and after that dealing with the development of the study programme while attracting teaching staff members for Liepāja branch.

Revise the course descriptions and eliminate deficiencies.

## II. "International Business and Law" ASSESSMENT

### II. "International Business and Law" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

Study name programme and degree:

Duration and qualifications conform to the regulations. Graduates receive a Professional Master's Degree in Business Administration and Professional Qualification of Manager of Organisations. The learning outcomes and the related mapped basic, professional, and scientific courses of the study programme are of sufficient duration and level to be compliant with the requirements of LQF/EQF level 7. At this time the programme has only been implemented on a full time basis for 60 CP (1 year and 6 months) and part-time (2 years) and for 80 CP programme full-time (2 years) and part-time (2 years and 6 months) but is submitted for the extension of other implementation possibilities (distance based).

Mission, aims/programme objectives/outcomes:

The aim of the programme is described in the SAR as "to prepare highly qualified specialists in the field of business management with in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge in international business law". The 215 requirements of the professional standard are all mapped to courses delivered in the programme. The learning outcomes do relate to these professional requirements and the mapping of learning outcomes to courses seems appropriate, although not always easy to infer.

Admission requirements: Admissions requirement is stated as a higher education - professional Bachelor's degree, higher professional education in management, economics, business and law; and motivational essay. How the essay is evaluated and weighted compared to the academic



requirement is not clear. All though not clearly indicated in the report nor on the programme website, the admission requirement do allow for recognition of learning outcomes achieved in previous education “In accordance with Cabinet Regulations No 505 “Regulations on the Recognition of Competences Acquired Outside Formal Education or Professional Experience and Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education” dated 14 August 2018, one is entitled to submit an application to RSU regarding recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired in previous education or professional experience in a study programme or part thereof implemented by the University. Decision on the recognition of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience is made by the Commission on Recognition of Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education or Professional Experience established by the University” (SAR page 141).

The topic for the thesis selected corresponds to current trends in the business environment and society (as per the report). The report states that the number of students is increasing, the student data shows a different picture with numbers fluctuating between 6 and 15, with only 11 enrolled in 2018/19. The drop out rate for such a small programme is significant. These numbers are concerning and may indicate that admission requirements and/or support to students need to be reviewed and adjusted.

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

The programme complies with the regulations Regarding the State Standard for Second-Level Professional Higher Education. The 215 standards seem to have been mapped to the appropriate courses (17.1.\_pielik\_SBTM\_eng (3).pdf) and aim, mission, learning outcomes are all interrelated. Admission requirements seem appropriate, however, the high dropout rate might need to be researched and analysed to ensure that this is not related to misaligned admission requirements.

Strengths:

1. Mapping of the 215 professional requirements of the standard to the programme courses.

Weaknesses:

1. High dropout rate.
2. It is unclear how the essay is evaluated and weighed as a part of the admission process.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. Description of study courses/modules and final thesis: Descriptions of the study courses and placement are clear. Although the degree is closely related to practice, there does not appear to be a clear transparent system to get information about market relevancy, currency and development to improve the programme (the report describes this in general, but no evidence in the form of systematic employer contact has been provided). The programme includes two placement periods, one of 12 credit points for students of both 60 and 80 CP modes and another one, 14 credit points, for students with previously acquired academic education who are studying in the 80 CP programme. Annex 19 shows that the content of the courses is well balanced when looking at law and business issues. It further shows that there is appropriate adjustment of the programme for those that complete the 80 CP programme and those completing the 60 CP programme. Being modularized, the programme tailors to Part Time students with work responsibilities. The Master's thesis is a research work and must have an original orientation. As much as it can be concluded from a short study of the final master thesis presented to the experts' panel the theses are of appropriate quality and generally comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. Unfortunately, only theses in Latvian language were available for review. Most popular research

methods applied for the master thesis (surveys/ questionnaires and personal interviews) are similar to the methods applied for the bachelor thesis. However, it must be mentioned that financial justification of the solutions developed within the master theses are not always strong enough. In most cases the content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the research trends and the needs of the labor market. This said, having a cursory look at the master's theses of the graduates reveals that their scientific quality might benefit from having a look at whether and how it would be possible to integrate the international and law issues more, according to the title of the study programme. The aim of the study programme is fairly general, even though the professional requirements listed in Annex 19 are provided in great detail. Graduates mentioned in the interviews that managing life/study balance was not easy, especially during the time of writing the thesis.

2.2. Study implementation and facilitation methods are student-centered and teaching principles are taken into account. Most courses are delivered in lecture or seminar format. Within that format, there is an emphasis on student interaction, activity, and involvement. The courses are delivered in module format and only one module is taken at the time. During the interview with students, the students described the programme as unique in Latvia and commented positively on the good balance between practice and academics in the course offerings.

2.3. Feedback from surveys and other evaluations is seriously considered. The responses to the surveys (students, (placement) employers) are used to improve the quality of the courses and the overall programme. Graduate surveys indicate that the programme is relevant and practical and their employment shows that the programme is competitive in the market. Employer surveys show satisfaction in the graduates' performance and attitude. During the interview with students, they mentioned that they are surveyed regularly. The students are generally positive about the programme and did mention that they have ample opportunity to voice their suggestions and comments and that the programme management is responsive.

2.4. Students are aware of the Erasmus programme and the study abroad opportunities. The programme offers four courses in English that are open to incoming foreign students. During the student interviews, the students talked very positively about their experience with study abroad opportunities. They also commented that they would have liked to have had more foreign lectures.

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

The programme is compliant with the legal regulations. Graduates are very positive about how the school prepared them for employment opportunities and the jobs they currently have. Learning outcomes are appropriately mapped to the courses and fit with the requirements of the profession and the industry. Students mentioned life/study balance and the limited number of foreign lecturers as improvement areas.

Strengths:

1. The uniqueness of the programme in Latvia (mentioned by students and graduates).
2. Right balance of the combination of practice and academically-oriented courses in the programme.

Weaknesses:

None identified.

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

## Analysis

3.1. Study, informative and technical provision by RSU, its library, and Business incubator are good and sufficient for implementing the study process in Latvian and also in English, as the majority of the databases and literature are available in the English language. The library very actively tries to provide necessary databases and the newest literature, also taking into account students' requests (SAR, p. 57). RSU pays a lot of attention to funding its library which could be assessed during the on-site visit, judging by the materials shown by the representative of the library. Study materials provided by RSU comply with the study aims and give students and teaching staff members the necessary tools for achieving the learning outcomes, research included full and part-time studies on site, for both - the short and long modules. What comes to distance learning options of implementing the study programme for full-time distance learning and part-time extramural study distance education, only materials, which could be assessed were databases, and e-study environment, with lecture recordings, which although are outstanding, but not sufficient for fully implemented distance learning in both languages. According to experts' observation, RSU has responded to the external challenges created by Covid-19 and has created methodological and IT support structures and is in process of adaptation, but besides that, the mentioned process hasn't been finished with full study material complexes for all intended versions of existing study programmes, as the preparation of the distance education materials is in the progress now. Judging from the trend, the study programme on average enrolls around 10 students each study year, keeping the overall student number in the programme at a bit more than 20 (16\_pielik\_SBTM\_statistika\_engM.pdf) from whom all are paying tuition fee of 2150 EUR per year (SAR, p. 44). The average cost per student per year is 1623 EUR (SAR, p. 45) which means that the study programme costs are quite close with revenue, which might cause some financial problems in the long term if the number of students starts to decrease.

Material resources in Liepāja branch, knowing the early stages of developing this study programme in Liepāja branch are more suited for medical education, which can be noted in the annex as well (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf, Annex of SAR). Besides the administrative support, classrooms, computer class, and library, experts cannot assess the study and informative resources as equal to the RSU library. There is currently no market research conducted in Liepāja considering the demand for this study programme which makes the risks for the launching of this study programme implementation in Liepāja too big as of the present moment. Judging also by the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study field it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepāja branch." (SAR, p. 175). There is no evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant outputs so far.

3.2. Not applicable.

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

RSU has provided resources necessary for implementing high-level study processes and achieving the learning outcomes and study aims. It could be assessed that RSU pays a lot of attention to improving their material-technical provision for studies outside the medical field. The library-provided resources are good and with a tendency to increase the number of subscribed databases. The study programme can be implemented in English as there are a lot of materials in English already in use while implementing this study programme in Latvian. There could be problems with implementing the distance learning options at this moment for this study programme, as for now, RSU lacks the full set of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages. Study programme financial sustainability is heavily dependent on keeping the number of

enrolled students at least steady. What comes to Liepāja branch and intended study programmes there, it is clear, that these study programmes are in a very early development stage and as the infrastructure is sufficient to implement them, available resources from the library are noticeably narrower than in Riga.

Strengths:

1. RSU pays attention to increasing the budget of their library, in order to provide more study materials.
2. Outstanding e-studies environment for on-site studies and remote study process.

Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

"As online video lectures are planned in the study process, the content of the programme is provided by the same teaching staff as in Riga, but many study courses also involve lecturers from Liepāja Branch, who deliver courses in Liepāja" (Annex 2 of SAR) and there were no data presented to experts about lecturers from Liepāja Branch who deliver courses in Liepāja, as explained by RSU representatives that it is still under development, in this report experts analyse only data about teaching staff in Riga branch.

4.1. 16 lecturers are involved in the programme (Annex 19.2). According to SAR (p. 157), the composition of lecturers engaged in the study programme has not changed much in the reporting period. According to the standard, institutions should provide measures about changes in the academic staff. SAR does not provide any measures (SAR, p. 322). There are visible no risks in the structure of the academic staff – the staff has adequate competencies linked with the delivered courses. (Annex 6.2, Annex 19.2).

4.2. The programme has a professional profile. SAR provides here clear information about linking staff professional experience with delivered programmes and courses (SAR, p. 157). Generally based on the SAR and observations collected during the visit, there were not identified any significant gaps in the composition of the academic staff from the perspective of legal requirements however there were noticed some fields not sufficiently covered by SAR (Annex: 6.2, 6.4, and 19), for example, the description of the lecturer delivering a course "International Tax and Finance Law" does not provide information about his experience and knowledge in the field of international tax and finance law. Students recognize the high engagement of the teaching staff and they did not report any problems related to the teaching staff.

4.3. Not applicable.

4.4. There is a visible contribution of the academic staff in the research in the field of economy and business. The teaching staff is involved in research. It is also visible the international activeness of the staff (Annex 6.4.). The obtained information is used in the study process. The interviews showed that the academic staff connection with the public and private sector is at a good level.

4.5. The mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and between the director of the programme and teaching staff was discussed during interviews and it is at a satisfactory level.

The teaching staff confirmed that it is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in place based on regular meetings.

### Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The qualification and research record of the academic staff is on a satisfactory level. It is a visible high engagement of the teaching staff. The collaboration of the academic staff is at a good level. For the purpose of SAR, there is a gap in providing quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period. There was also identified a problem with the description of the qualification of academic staff for delivering courses.

Strengths:

1. Proper qualification and research record of the academic staff.
2. High engagement and student-focused approach of the academic staff.
3. Good mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and with the director of the programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period.
2. Some description of the qualifications of the academic staff is not directly linked with courses delivered by them.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "International Business and Law"

### 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:** The sample of the diploma complies with the regulations.  
(24-1\_pielik\_SBTM\_diploma\_paraugs\_ENG.pdf)

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:** RSU has no agreement in place with any other HEI in Latvia regarding the options to continue the studies at another higher education institution. Instead, the option to continue education in the study programme International Marketing and Business Management at RSU is provided. (24-2\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_citu\_StP\_VANIP\_eng.pdf)

Although the formal requirements are met, the experts point out that the specifics of the International Marketing and Business Management are quite different from International Business and Law.

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 24-3 confirms that the institution guarantees compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the license 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.

24-3\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_zaudejumiem\_VANIP\_parakstits\_eng.pdf

- 4 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:** The attached resumes confirm that state language proficiency is compliant with regulations Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi"

- 5 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:** The compliance of English proficiency level of the teaching staff is confirmed by Annex 24-5.

(24-5\_pielik\_Apliecin\_anglu\_val\_StV\_VANIP-p\_tulk\_eng.pdf)

- 6 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:**

- 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:**

- 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 of study agreement attached (24.8\_pielik\_Studiju\_lig\_eng.pdf) complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi"

- 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 and the study materials are prepared in English and in Latvian according to requirements

(20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_SBTM\_ENG.pdf; 20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_SBTM\_LV.pdf)

- 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:** The study programme complies with the professional standard and the requirements for the professional qualification  
(18-2\_pielik\_Prof\_stand\_kart\_SBTM\_eng.pdf)

- 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:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme complies with the Professional Higher Education Standard.  
(17.1\_pielik\_SBTM\_eng.pdf)

- 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:**

- 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:** All members of the teaching staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years or a five-year practical work experience  
(6.2\_pielik\_CV\_eng.pdf; 6.4\_pielik\_Publikacijas\_uzlabots\_lv (4).pdf; Annex 6.5)

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The key points, which facilitate the assessment of the compliance of the study programme are fully compliant

## 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:** The learning outcome achievement is confirmed by the availability of financing (tuition), excellent study and work infrastructure, access to study materials, and communication via Moodle platform, the library at the Riga campus. A poor collection of books in the study field is available on the Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

- 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:** The local and visiting academic staff of the Riga campus comply with the regulatory requirements. No local academic staff is identified at the Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

- 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme leading to the master's degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science. (Annexes 6.2, 6.4, 6.5 of SAR).

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The evaluation of the study provision, scientific support, 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, as well as the compliance of the qualification of the teaching 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 is provided for the existing modes of the study programme delivered in Riga.

The experts visited the Liepaja branch of RSU, however only premises, administrative support, and library were subject of evaluation in Liepaja. The description of the material and technical provision at RSU Liepāja Branch (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf) gives valuable insight into the operations of the Liepaja branch (although it should be noted that the information relevant to medical studies doesn't provide value to the study field under evaluation). No local faculty and no local academic support were identified in Liepaja yet. No market research has been conducted either. Although RSU has technical possibilities and the academic capacity (faculty) to run courses remotely from Riga, and technically the study programme can be offered not only in Riga, the experts identified that the preparatory actions regarding starting studies particularly at the Liepaja branch have not been completed at the moment. It is clearly indicated in the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study direction it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepaja branch." (p. 175, SAR) The experts didn't get any evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant outputs so far. The meeting with the municipality and business representatives in Liepaja confirmed that no concrete discussions have been conducted and no particular plan has been produced for justification of launching the study programme in Liepaja.

Strengths:

1. The study programme combining business and legal issues is unique in Latvia.
2. Good balance between theory and practice.

Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.
2. Study programmes for the Liepāja branch are in very early development stages, and there are no local teaching staff members from the study field yet.

## Evaluation of the study programme "International Business and Law"

Evaluation of the study programme:



Good

## 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "International Business and Law"

### Short-term recommendations

The description of the qualifications of the academic staff (CV-s) should be directly linked with delivered by them courses.

Increase transparency about the admissions criteria when it comes to the judging and weighting of the essay as a part of the admission process.

### Long-term recommendations

Running quantitative analysis equipped with measures about changes in the academic staff.

Before opening other variations of implementing the study programme RSU should have provided all necessary materials according to the methodology for the form of studies and languages of the implementation before enrolling the students.

Market research in order to conclude the necessity of opening this study programme in Liepāja and after that dealing with the development of the study programme while attracting teaching staff members for the Liepāja branch.

Monitor the dropout rate and implement tools and measures to decrease the rate.

Review, and if there is justification, adjust the workload pressure for students especially during the time of writing the thesis (improvement of life/study balance).

Consider possibility to strengthen the master thesis by integrating the international and law issues more, according to the title of the study programme. Financial justification of the solutions developed within the master should be strengthened, as well.

## II. "Management of International Marketing and Business" ASSESSMENT

### II. "Management of International Marketing and Business" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

Study programme name and degree: The Professional Master's Degree in Business Administration and the professional qualification of "Manager of Organisation" correspond to the title of the study programme, including the relevant field of science and with an emphasis on international marketing and business management. The programme complies with the Cabinet Regulations No. 512 "Regulations on the National Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education" of 26 August 2014. The programme offers 80 CP (or 60 CP). These studies are intended for students with previously acquired professional higher education, and 120 ECTS). The 60 CP programme full-time is 1 year and 6 months, and part-time 2 years. The 80 CP programme full-time is 2 years, and part-time is 2 years and 6 months and is available in English and Latvian.

Mission, aims/programme objectives/outcomes: The aim of the study programme is to prepare highly qualified specialists in the field of business management with in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge in international marketing and business management. The name of the study

programme and the degree “professional master’s in business administration and professional qualification of manager of organisations” seem appropriate when looking at the course content, the learning objectives and the aim of the programme. The mapping of learning outcomes to courses seem appropriate, although not always easy to infer. There are a total of six learning outcomes with long descriptions combining often more learning goals in one. A few examples are: learning goal 3: Will acquire the ability to integrate international marketing and business management knowledge, contribute to the generation of new knowledge, including the development of new approaches and methods, and be able to assess the impact of professional activity on the environment and society, and independently develop one’s professional competences;

learning goal 4: Will be able to do business, to find innovative solutions in the international marketing and business management, be able to work in a team and take responsibility for work results and analysis thereof, to independently propose ideas, to plan, structure and manage large scale projects, including international and scientific projects.

Admission requirements: All though the difference in admission requirements not clearly are specified in the SAR or on the website, the process of admitting students is rigid and in depth and especially the motivation essay as well as the previous professional experience weigh heavy. An applicant is entitled to submit an application to Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU) regarding recognition of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in previous education or professional experience in a study programme or part thereof implemented by the university. Decision on recognition of study results achieved in previous education or professional experience is made by the Commission on Recognition of Study Results Achieved in Previous Education or Professional Experience established by the University. The admission requirements are aligned with the regulations -Bachelor degree and at least 2 years work experience in business or management or Bachelor's degree or higher education gaining at least 10 CP from basic economic and legal studies as well as at least 2 years professional experience in business or management along with a motivation essay. Important in the admission is the assessment of the applicants' previous education. If it is not related to commercial studies, the professional experience of the applicants in business management is to be assessed. In this also the motivation of students is essential, In the motivation essay, applicants must substantiate their motivation to study, including a description of their undergraduate education and professional experience as a basis for further graduate studies, define a future professional perspective (to be pursued after the graduation) and identify research interests for the development of the Master's thesis.

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

The programme name, degree, qualifications, aims, objectives, and admission requirements all seem to be interrelated and at the appropriate level. Learning outcomes are too broad and complex to be measured appropriately.

Strengths:

1. Course content matches the learning outcomes.

Weaknesses:

1. The learning outcomes goals are too broad and include multiple learning goals in one, making them difficult to measure.

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

### **Analysis**

- 2.1. Descriptions of the study courses and placements are clear. Although the degree is closely

related to practice, there does not appear to be a clear transparent system to get information about market relevancy, currency, and development to improve the programme (the report describes this in general, but no evidence in the form of systematic employer contact has been provided). Graduates commented that they would have preferred to see more guest lectures and innovative cases. As much as it can be concluded from a short study of the final master thesis presented to the experts' panel that the theses are of appropriate quality and generally comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. Unfortunately, only theses in the Latvian language were available for review. The most popular research methods applied for the master thesis (surveys/questionnaires and personal interviews) are similar to the methods applied for the bachelor thesis. However, it must be mentioned that the financial justification of the solutions developed within the master thesis is not always strong enough. Students are showing their ability to collect information, analyze it, but the ability to justify the business decisions is not always reflected in the thesis. In most cases, the content is relevant and complimentary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the research trends and the needs of the labor market. However, international issues are not always present in the theses.

2.2. As evidenced by the course descriptions and the assessment methods described in the annex 20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_SMBVM\_ENG (1).pdf as well as from the student interviews, it shows that the study implementation and facilitation methods are student-centered and teaching principles are taken into account. The study process is implemented mostly as interactive lectures, practical interactive classes of seminars, and independent work of students. The teaching methods stimulate student-student and student-teacher interaction (SAR 2.3). The Evaluation/assessment methods are appropriate and include safeguarding against possible fraud and plagiarism (SAR 2.6).

2.3. The responses to the surveys (students, (placement) employers) are used to improve the quality of the courses and the overall programme. Graduate surveys indicate that the programme is relevant and practical and their employment shows that the programme is competitive in the market. Employer surveys show satisfaction in the graduates' performance and attitude. Students are surveyed regularly and their responses are generally positive. Suggestions are reviewed, discussed, and used to improve the programme.

2.4. Students mentioned that only three courses are facilitated in English which making it difficult for incoming foreign Erasmus students to participate. Students were commendable about the opportunities to go on a study abroad via Erasmus project and satisfied with the way in which the recognition of the learning activities/outcomes abroad. Graduates commented that they would have liked to have seen more foreign guest lecturers.

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

Suggestions of students, employers, and other stakeholders are used to continuously improve the programme. The programme offers a large number of courses with internationally oriented content, however, the use of study abroad appears to be limited.

Strengths:

1. Participation in the Erasmus programme.

Weaknesses:

1. The small number of students.
2. Few foreign lecturers.

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

#### Analysis

3.1. Study, informative and technical provision by RSU, its library, and Business incubator are good and sufficient for implementing the study process in Latvian and also in English, as the majority of the databases and literature are available in the English language. The library very actively tries to provide necessary databases and the newest literature, also taking into account students' requests (SAR, p. 57). RSU pays a lot of attention to funding its library which could be assessed during the on-site visit, judging by the materials shown by the representative of the library. Study materials provided by RSU comply with the study aims and give students and teaching staff members the necessary tools for achieving the learning outcomes, research included full and part-time studies on site, for both - short and long modules. What comes to distance learning options of implementing the study programme for full-time distance learning and part-time extramural study distance education, only materials, which could be assessed were databases, and e-study environment, with lecture recordings, which although are outstanding, but not sufficient for fully implemented distance learning in both languages. According to experts' observation, RSU has responded to the external challenges created by Covid-19 and has created methodological and IT support structures and is in process of adaptation, but besides that, the mentioned process hasn't been finished with full study material complexes for all intended versions of existing study programmes, as the preparation of the distance education materials is in the progress now.

Judging from the trend, the number of enrolled students in this study programme fluctuates and it is hard to tell whether the number next year will grow. Overall student numbers in the programme also fluctuated in the last three years from 54 to 34 and 42 (16\_pielik\_SMBVM\_statistika\_lvM.pdf). All the students are paying tuition fees of 2150 EUR per year (SAR, p. 44). The average cost per student per year is 1853 EUR (SAR, p. 45) which means that the study programme might not be sustainable in the long term, considering the small difference between the costs and revenue and the small number of enrolled students.

3.2. Not applicable.

#### Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

RSU has provided resources necessary for implementing high-level study processes and achieving the learning outcomes and study aims. It could be assessed that RSU pays a lot of attention to improving their material-technical provision for studies outside the medical field. The library-provided resources are good and with a tendency to increase the number of subscribed databases. The study programme can be implemented in English as there are a lot of materials in English already in use while implementing this study programme in Latvian. There could be problems with implementing the distance learning options at this moment for this study programme, as for now, RSU lacks the full set of materials in both languages corresponding to distance learning methodology. The financial sustainability for this study programme is very dependent on increasing the number of students, as the costs and revenue are very close for this programme.

Strengths:

1. RSU pays attention to increasing the budget of their library, in order to provide more study materials.
2. Outstanding e-studies environment for on-site studies and remote study process.

Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance

learning methodology in both languages.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

4.1. 15 lecturers are involved in the programme (Annex 19.2). According to SAR (p. 273), "the lecturers engaged in the study programme have not changed in the reporting period". There are no visible risks in the structure of the academic staff – the staff has adequate competences linked with the delivered courses. (Annex 6.2, Annex 19.2).

4.2. The programme has a professional profile. SAR provides here clear information about linking staff professional experience with delivered programmes and courses (SAR, p. 274-275). Based on the SAR and observations collected during the visit, there were not identified any gaps in the composition of the academic staff from the perspective of legal requirements. Generally based on the SAR and observations collected during the visit, there were not identified any significant gaps in the composition of the academic staff from the perspective of legal requirements however there were noticed some fields not sufficiently covered by SAR (Annex: 6.2, 6.4, and 19), for example, the description of the lecturer delivering a course "International Tax and Finance Law" does not provide information about his experience and knowledge in the field of international tax and finance law. Students recognize the high engagement of the teaching staff and they did not report any problems related to the teaching staff.

4.3. Not applicable.

4.4. There is a visible contribution of the academic staff in the research in the field of economy and business. The teaching staff is involved in research. The international activeness of the staff is presented (Annex 6.4.). The research information is used in the study process. The interviews showed that the academic staff connection with the public and private sector is at a good level. However, the relevant information about achievements related to the management field have not been separated from the non-relevant information about achievements related to the field of medicine.

4.5. The mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and between the director of the programme and teaching staff was discussed during interviews and it is at a satisfactory level. The teaching staff confirmed that it is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in place based on regular meetings.

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

The qualification and research record of the academic staff is on a satisfactory level. It is a visible high engagement of the teaching staff. The collaboration of the academic staff is at a good level. There was identified a problem with the description of the qualification of some academic staff for delivering courses.

Strengths:

1. Proper qualification and research record of the academic staff.
2. High engagement and student-focused approach of the academic staff.
3. Good mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and with the director of the programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Some description of the qualifications of the academic staff is not linked directly with courses delivered by them.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Management of International Marketing and Business"

### 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:** The sample of the diploma complies with the regulations.

(24-1\_pielik\_SMBVM\_diploma\_paraugs\_ENG.pdf)

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:** RSU has no agreement in place with any other HEI in Latvia regarding the options to continue the studies at another higher education institution. Instead, the option to continue education in the study programme International Business and Law at RSU is provided.

(24-2\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_citu\_StP\_VANIP\_eng.pdf)

Although the formal requirements are met, the experts point out that the specifics of International Business and Law are quite different from International Marketing and Business Management.

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 24-3 confirms that the institution guarantees compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the license 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.

24-3\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_zaudejumiem\_VANIP\_parakstits\_eng.pdf

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:** The attached resumes confirm that state language proficiency is compliant with regulations Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi"

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:** The compliance of the English proficiency level of the teaching staff is confirmed by Annex 24-5.

(24-5\_pielik\_Apliecin\_anglu\_val\_StV\_VANIP-p\_tulk\_eng.pdf)

- 6 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:**

- 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:**

- 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 of study agreement attached (24.8\_pielik\_Studiju\_lig\_eng.pdf) complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi"

- 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 and the study materials are prepared in English and in Latvian according to requirements (20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_SMBVM\_ENG.pdf; 20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_SMBVM\_LV.pdf)

- 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:** The study programme complies with the professional standard and the requirements for the professional qualification (18-2\_pielik\_Prof\_standarta\_kartejums\_SMBVM\_eng.pdf)

- 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:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme complies with the Professional Higher Education Standard. (17.1\_pielik\_Atb\_izgl\_stand\_SMBVM\_eng.pdf)

- 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:**

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:** All members of the teaching staff has either publication published in reviewed editions within the last six years or a five-year practical work experience (6.2\_pielik\_CV\_eng.pdf; 6.4\_pielik\_Publikacijas\_uzlabots\_lv (4).pdf; Annex 6.5)

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The key points, which facilitate the assessment of the compliance of the study programme are fully compliant.

## 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:** The learning outcome achievement is confirmed by the availability of financing (tuition), excellent study and work infrastructure, access to study materials, and communication via Moodle platform, the library. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

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:** The local and visiting academic staff comply with the regulatory requirements. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme leading to the master's degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science. (Annexes 6.2, 6.4, 6.5).

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The evaluation of the study provision, scientific support, 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, as well as the compliance of the qualification of the teaching 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 is provided for the existing modes of the study programme.

Strengths:

1. The programme is competitive in the market.



2. Study implementation and facilitation methods are student-centered.

Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Management of International Marketing and Business"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Management of International Marketing and Business"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

The description of the qualifications of the academic staff (CV-s) should be directly linked with delivered by them courses.

### **Long-term recommendations**

Before opening other variations of implementing the study programme RSU should have provided all necessary materials according to the methodology for the form of studies and languages of the implementation before enrolling the students.

Increase the number of foreign lecturers to teach in the programme.

Benchmark the programme with other similar programmes to further improve the programme and course content and make it attractive to more students (from outside the own institution).

## **II. "Business Management and Economics" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Business Management and Economics" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

Study programme name and degree:

The degree to be obtained is a doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Economics and Business and in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No 49 of 23 January 2018 "On fields and subfields of science in Latvia", Economics and Business (5.2.) have been distinguished as a field of science that comprises business research, related to enterprise/organisation or processes and their cooperative policy, planning, organisation, management and control aimed at an enterprise's/organisation's, its employees', financial, material or information resource more thorough use in order achieve specific goals (SAR p.103). At present, the total number of students in the programme is 10. The programme is offered in Latvian in a full-time format. RSU has an ambition to deliver the study programme in other formats and places, as well, e.g. part time studies, full time distance learning, extramural studies distance education. Eventually offering the programme in English depends on (foreign) students' interest in the programme.

Aim of the programme:

Graduates of the study programme are able to work as highly-qualified researchers in public and municipality authorities, non-governmental sector, as well as in different organisations, to teach study courses in Latvian and foreign institutions of higher education.

Admission requirements:

The programme is open to graduates of the RSU Master's study programme "International Business and Law" and "Management of International Marketing and Business", but also to those who have a Master's degree in social sciences, management, commercial sciences, economics, labour protection and in other related scientific fields in other institutions of higher education. Additionally, persons with a Master's degree in other scientific fields who have passed the entrance examination in management science and who have at least two years of work experience in economics, commercial sciences, and entrepreneurship.

The topics of the dissertations are interdisciplinary and/or related to health care or business management and reflect international significance. The language of the theses is Latvian.

RSU has 5 professors having rights of an expert of the Latvian Council of Science (24.6\_24.7\_pielik\_Apliecinajums\_Dv\_PD\_en (2).pdf). However experts didn't find confirmation that the the Promotion Council have been established. Information about the RSU Promotion Council in the field was found neither in the SAR nor relevant part of the RSU www page. Promotion rights in the field of Economics and Business are not delegated to RSU according to the Rules of Cabinet of Ministers Nr.1000 (December 27, 2005, minutes Nr.77 1.§).

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

It is a fairly new programme that does not have any graduates yet. The degree, aims, objectives, and learning outcomes are interrelated. Dissertation topics are appropriate for the study field.

Strengths:

1. The interdisciplinary character of the programme is evidenced by the topics of theses.

Weaknesses:

1. RSU Promotion Council in the field is not established.
2. The usual language of the dissertation so far is Latvian. Having the dissertation written in English will allow for easier sharing of the learning and knowledge globally already during the programme. However there is one exception – the doctoral thesis of D. Grossu has been published in English. However, keeping into consideration the international orientation of RSU, experts have no doubts that more and more dissertations will be published in English.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. The objective of the study courses is to prepare doctoral students for independent scientific research, doctoral examination and to improve their pedagogical skills. The courses offered in compulsory and compulsory elective parts, when considering the acquisition of the necessary knowledge competencies and skills, are at the EFQ level 8. The doctoral student conducts scientific research in cooperation with the supervisor of the doctoral thesis and is carried out in accordance with the plan developed by the doctoral student and the supervisor.

The courses described in annex 0\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_DV\_ENG (1).pdf seem to fit with the aim

of the programme. A review of the course descriptions shows an appropriate balance of science related, business, economics and management courses.

2.2. Although in a number of courses the gained knowledge and skills are assessed with regular exams, the doctoral student obtains the largest number of credit points for scientific research work. Success is ensured by scientific activity - participation in scientific conferences, publication of theses, participation in scientific projects, as well as publications in internationally cited journals. Reviewing the information under assessment (independent learning) documented in annex 0\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_DV\_ENG (1).pdf, indicates that the student is at the center of the learning and teaching as much of the learning is accomplished by interaction with the thesis supervisor, collaboration with other students, and active involvement in discussions, seminars, and lectures. This was also confirmed in conversations with doctoral students.

2.3. All stakeholder groups are involved in the review of the programme in an effort to work on the continuous improvement of the programme. Assessments take the form of surveys, face-to-face interviews, focus groups, etc. An example of implementing suggestions is the suggestion from employers to ensure that the study courses of the doctoral study programme and their implementation methods (group work, discussions, case studies, etc.) provide future specialists with analytical and critical thinking, data analysis, and public speaking/presentation skills, time management skills and business thinking. In general, students are positive about the studies and the lecturers. They would, however, like to see more collaboration with foreign industry experts and visiting lecturers in order to strengthen international cooperation, to ensure several practical guest lectures and opportunities to participate in the study activities in foreign countries. This feedback will be taken into consideration by programme management.

2.4. For academic and professional development RSU has contracts with other universities in Europe. Current students do not make use of the outgoing mobility opportunities because they combine work with studies.

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

The RSU can build on the long-term experience and success of doctoral programmes at the university. This is especially noticed when looking at the content and design of the courses and the interdisciplinary topics of the dissertation/thesis (health care management). Courses and learning goals are at the appropriate level (8) and address the appropriate skills and knowledge. The international component is brought in through collaboration with other universities in Europe for professional and academic learning and development. At the time of this evaluation, the programme did not have any graduates yet.

Strengths:

1. Being able to build on the long-term experience with doctoral programmes at RSU.

Weaknesses:

1. None identified.

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

### **Analysis**

3.1. Study, informative and technical provision by RSU, its library, and Business incubator are good and sufficient for implementing the study process in Latvian and also in English, as the majority of

the databases and literature are available in the English language. The library very actively tries to provide necessary databases and the newest literature, also taking into account students' requests (SAR, p. 57). RSU pays a lot of attention to funding its library which could be assessed during the on-site visit, judging by the materials shown by the representative of the library. Study materials provided by RSU comply with the study aims and give students and teaching staff members the necessary tools for achieving the learning outcomes, research included for full and part-time studies on site. What comes to distance learning options of implementing the study programme for full-time distance learning and part-time extramural study distance education, only materials, which could be assessed were databases, and e-study environment, with lecture recordings, which although are outstanding, but not sufficient for fully implemented distance learning in both languages. According to experts' observation, RSU has responded to the external challenges created by Covid-19 and has created methodological and IT support structures and is in process of adaptation, but besides that, the mentioned process hasn't been finished with full study material complexes for all intended versions of existing study programmes, as the preparation of the distance education materials is in the progress now.

The doctoral study programme started enlisting students from 2018(SAR, p.102), which means that students enrolled haven't gone through the full study cycle. Overall student number in the programme at the moment is 10 (16\_pielik\_Dv\_statistika\_eng.pdf), and in comparison to other study programmes doctoral study programmes have state-funded study places. The number of state-funded study places is growing which can be noted as a positive trend. The tuition fee for studies in this programme is 2100 EUR per year (SAR, p. 48). The average cost per student per year is 2925 EUR (SAR, p. 49) which means that the study programme costs are bigger than the revenue, but as this study programme has state-funded study places in the majority, in accordance with The regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 994. and the coefficients applied for the doctoral study programmes, it is clear that the revenue from state-funded study places overweighs the loss created by the tuition fees.

Material resources in Liepāja branch, knowing the early stages of developing this study programme in Liepāja branch are more suited for medical education, which can be noted in the annex as well (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf, Annex of SAR). Besides the administrative support, classrooms, computer class, and library, experts cannot assess the study and informative resources as equal to the RSU library. There is currently no market research conducted in Liepāja considering the demand for this study programme which makes the risks for the launching of this study programme implementation in Liepāja too big as of the present moment. Judging also by the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study field it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepaja branch." (p. 175, SAR). There is no evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant outputs so far.

3.2. Resources RSU provides within the cooperation with other scientific institutions and higher education institutions are compliant with the requirements for the implementation of the doctoral study programme. RSU has very close cooperation with 11 organisations for students to do research with (SAR, p. 116). The main objective for doctoral students in RSU is to work with matters of national and international level, observing and analysing the situation within Latvia, and putting it into international context (SAR, p. 116). Such an objective is closely related to internationalisation related aims of RSU. Therefore students are encouraged to use the international research and scientific cooperation opportunities, such as take part in research projects by RSU partner organisations abroad.

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

RSU has provided resources necessary for implementing high-level study processes and achieving the learning outcomes and study aims. It could be assessed that RSU pays a lot of attention to improving their material-technical provision for studies outside the medical field. The library-provided resources are good and with a tendency to increase the number of subscribed databases. The study programme can be implemented in English as there are a lot of materials in English already in use while implementing this study programme in Latvian. There could be problems with implementing the distance learning options at this moment for this study programme, as for now, RSU lacks the full set of materials in both languages corresponding to distance learning methodology. Study programme financial sustainability is heavily dependent on keeping the state-funded study places in the majority. Doctoral students are very heavily engaged in research activities on the national and international levels. What comes to Liepāja branch and intended study programmes there, it is clear, that these study programmes are in a very early development stage and as the infrastructure is sufficient to implement them, available resources from the library are noticeably narrower than in Riga.

#### Strengths:

1. RSU pays attention to increasing the budget of their library, in order to provide more study materials.
2. Outstanding e-studies environment for on-site studies and remote study process.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.
2. The tuition fee for studies in this programme is lower than the average cost per student. That means some cross subsidies are taking place.

## 4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

"As online video lectures are planned in the study process, the content of the programme is provided by the same teaching staff as in Riga, but many study courses also involve lecturers from Liepāja Branch, who deliver courses in Liepāja" (Annex 2) and there were no data presented to experts about lecturers from Liepāja Branch who deliver courses in Liepāja, as explained by RSU representatives that it is still under development, in this report experts analyse only data about teaching staff in Riga branch.

4.1. 18 lecturers are involved in the programme (Annex 19.2). SAR does not provide detailed information about changes in the reporting period, only it sends the reader to the section dedicated to the study field (p. 117). According to the standard, institutions should provide measures about changes in the academic staff. SAR does not provide any measures (SAR, p. 117). Based on the analysis of the section study field, there are not visible risks in the structure of the academic staff – the staff has adequate competences linked with the delivered courses. (Annex 6.2, Annex 19.2).

4.2. SAR provides clear information about linking the qualification of the academic staff with delivered programmes and courses (SAR, p. 274-275). Eight professors, five associate professors, two assistant professors, including one full-time RSU lead researcher, one senior lecturer, and one lecturer in the foreign language course are teaching in the programme. Based on the SAR and observations collected during the visit, there were not identified any gaps in the composition of the academic staff from the perspective of legal requirements. Based on the visit, it is visible that students recognize the high engagement of the teaching staff.

4.3. The scientific publications of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programmes and the involvement of the teaching staff in research-related projects contribute to the implementation of a high-quality doctoral study programme (Annex 6.2., Annex 6.4.). The visit confirmed the above analysis.

4.4. There is a visible contribution of the academic staff in the research in the field of economy and business. The teaching staff is involved in research. It is also visible the international activeness of the staff (Annex 6.4.). The obtained information is used in the study process. The interviews showed that the academic staff is actively involved in research on the level adequate to a doctoral programme.

4.5. The mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and between the director of the programme and teaching staff was discussed during interviews and it is at a satisfactory level. The teaching staff confirmed that it is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in place based on regular meetings.

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

The qualification and research record of the academic staff is on appropriate level. High engagement of the teaching staff and high involvement in research on the level adequate to a doctoral programme have been identified. The collaboration of the academic staff is at a good level. For the purpose of SAR, there is a gap in providing quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period.

Strengths:

1. Proper qualification and research record of the academic staff.
2. High engagement and student-focused approach of the academic staff.
3. High involvement of the academic staff in research.
4. Good mutual collaboration between the teaching staff and with the director of the programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of quantitative analysis and measures in changes of the academic staff in the evaluation period.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Business Management and Economics"**

### **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:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The sample of the diploma itself complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.

(24-1\_pielik\_BVE\_diploma\_paraugs\_ENG.pdf) However at the moment the doctoral diploma can't be awarded by RSU as university has not established the Promotion Council yet. Promotion rights in the field of Economics and Business are not delegated to RSU according to the Rules of Cabinet of Ministers Nr.1000 (December 27, 2005, minutes Nr.77 1.š).

- 2 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:** RSU has an agreement in place with the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies regarding the options to continue the studies at the Doctoral study programme Agrarian and Regional Economics at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies. (Agreement No. 59-21/2020/0003)

(24-2\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_citu\_StP\_VANIP\_eng.pdf)

Although the formal requirements are met, the experts have concerns about whether the profiles of both study programmes are similar enough.

- 3 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 24-3 confirms that the institution guarantees compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the license 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.

(24-3\_pielikums\_Apliecinajums\_par\_zaudejumiem\_VANIP\_parakstits\_eng.pdf)

- 4 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:** The attached resumes confirm that state language proficiency is compliant with regulations Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi"

- 5 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:** The compliance of English proficiency level of the teaching staff is confirmed by Annex 24-5.

(24-5\_pielik\_Apliecin\_anglu\_val\_StV\_VANIP-p\_tulk\_eng.pdf)

- 6 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The faculty fully complies with requirements.

(24.6\_24.7\_pielik\_Apliecinajums\_Dv\_PD\_en.pdf) However the RSU Promotion Council in the field is not established at the moment.

- 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The faculty fully complies with requirements

(24.6\_24.7\_pielik\_Apliecinajums\_Dv\_PD\_en.pdf)

- 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 of study agreement attached (24.8\_pielik\_Studiju\_lig\_eng.pdf) complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi" However the agreement attached is designed particularly for studies for fee. Experts assume that most probably RSU has another study agreement particularly adjusted to the students financed by state budget, as well.

- 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 and the study materials are prepared in English and in Latvian according to requirements.

(20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_DV\_ENG.pdf; 20\_pielikums\_Studiju\_kursi\_DV\_LV.pdf)

- 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:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

- 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received (24-9\_pielik\_AIP\_atzinums\_eng.pdf)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

- 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:**

- 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:** Each member of the teaching staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years or a five-year practical work experience

(6.2\_pielik\_CV\_eng.pdf; 6.4\_pielik\_Publikacijas\_uzlabots\_lv (4).pdf; Annex 6.5)

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant



**Justification:** The key points, which facilitate the assessment of the compliance of the study programme are fully compliant, except partial compliance of point 1.

## 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:** The learning outcome achievement is confirmed by the availability of financing (state financing, tuition), excellent study and work infrastructure, access to study materials, and communication via Moodle platform, the library at the Riga campus. The insufficient collection of books in the study field is available on the Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

- 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:** The local and visiting academic staff of the Riga campus comply with the regulatory requirements. No local academic staff is identified at the Liepaja campus. Conferred by the interviews, observations, and analysis of documents performed by the experts.

- 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme leading to the doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science. (Annexes 6.2, 6.4, 6.5)

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The evaluation of the study provision, scientific support, 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, as well as the compliance of the qualification of the teaching 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 is provided for the existing modes of the study programme delivered in Riga.

The experts visited the Liepaja branch of RSU, however only premises, administrative support, and library were subject of evaluation in Liepaja. The description of the material and technical provision at RSU Liepāja Branch (2\_pielik\_LiepFil\_resursi\_eng (3).pdf) gives valuable insight into the operations of the Liepaja branch (although it should be noted that the information relevant to medical studies doesn't provide value to the study field under evaluation). No local faculty and no local academic support were identified in Liepaja yet. No market research has been conducted either. Although RSU has technical possibilities and the academic capacity (faculty) to run courses remotely from Riga, and technically the study programme can be offered not only in Riga, the experts identified that the preparatory actions regarding starting studies particularly at the Liepaja branch have not been completed at the moment. It is clearly indicated in the accreditation documents: "So far, the study programme has only been implemented in Riga, but in accordance with the plan for the development of the study direction it is planned to set up a workgroup to evaluate the possibilities

for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepaja branch.” (p. 175, SAR) The experts didn’t get any evidence that the workgroup has succeeded in producing any valuable and relevant outputs so far. The meeting with the municipality and business representatives in Liepaja confirmed that no concrete discussions have been conducted and no particular plan has been produced for justification of launching the study programme in Liepaja.

Strengths:

1. The study programme have highly qualified academic personnel.
2. Topics of the dissertations are interdisciplinary and/or related to health care or business management and reflect international significance.

Weaknesses:

1. Growing but at the moment the insufficient amount of materials corresponding to distance learning methodology in both languages.
2. Study programmes for the Liepāja branch are in very early development stages, and there are no local teaching staff members from the study field yet.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Business Management and Economics"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business Management and Economics"**

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

- |  |
|--|
| Running quantitative analysis equipped with measures about changes in the academic staff.  |
| Provide the sample agreement designed particularly for studies financed by state budget.   |
| Get Promotion Council in the field of Economics and Business established and approved according to the legislation in order to be able to award the diploma. |

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

- |  |
|--|
| Before opening other variations of implementing the study programme RSU should have provided all necessary materials according to the methodology for the form of studies and languages of the implementation before enrolling the students. |
| Market research in order to identify the demand of opening this study programme in Liepāja and after that dealing with the development of the study programme while attracting teaching staff members for the Liepāja branch.                |
| Consider motivating or requiring the dissertation to be written in English to allow for easier sharing of the learning and knowledge globally even while in the programme.   |

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

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

## Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
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		HEI ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems components.
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	<p>The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study field partly ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field. (SAR, annex 7).</p> <p>HEI needs to expand the circle of strategic partners to include different organizations and associations in Latvia and especially abroad. The fields and subjects of cooperation should be much wider than Erasmus + mobility or placements for local students. HEI has not set priorities for the development of partnerships or set specific results to be achieved. The main activities of the partnerships are related to the invitation of teachers to lectures and the implementation of projects</p>
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant		Scientific research is at a sufficient level.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
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.		Partially compliant		HEI has not fully fulfilled the recommendations of Experts provided in previous accreditation of the study field.

### 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	International Marketing and Advertising (43342)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
2	International Business and Sustainable Economy (43345)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
3	International Business and Start-up Entrepreneurship (43345)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
4	International Business and Law (47345)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
5	Management of International Marketing and Business (47345)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
6	Business Management and Economics (51345)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

None