

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Rēzekne Academy of Technologies

Study field: Manufacture and Processing

Experts:

1. Vladimirs Šatrevičs (Chair of the Experts Group)
2. Daiva Mikučioniene (Secretary of the Experts Group)
3. Mona Elena Popa
4. Kristaps Opincāns (Student Union of Latvia)
5. Inga Zemdega Grape (Employers' Confederation of Latvia)

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

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

RTA implements 2 study programmes in the study field "Manufacture and processing": 1st level professional study programme "Food Processing" - 41541, and 1st level professional study programme "Fashion Design and Technology" -41542. After getting acquainted with the SAR and supplemented documents, as well as the materials and the information obtained during the on-site visit, the experts have concluded that the study field is compliant with the requirements since insignificant shortcomings and deficiencies have been identified and they can be eliminated within the accreditation term of the study field.

### Positive aspects of the Study Field

The study aim is strategically right. The planned implementation of the SPs corresponds to the aim, tasks, and RTA Strategy. The uniqueness of both SPs (college level) is identified. The system of procedures is clear and sustainable. The management structure is suitable for the development of the SF. Overall, the management is efficient, and the support provided by the administrative and technical staff ensures all the needs of the SPs. RTA has procedures for the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education. RTA has clear principles and procedures for assessing the achievements of students. Very strong infrastructure (observed during the tour). The current staff is very qualified with great practical experience and participation in exhibitions, and industry events. Great collaboration with Regional institutions and international universities. Most of the recommendations are successfully implemented and periodically supported. Professional standards fully correspond to SP content and are respected by industrial partners. Students are mostly satisfied with the feedback from SP directors. Students, graduates and employers are assessing SPs content as successful.

### Negative aspects of the Study Field

National and international labour markets need to be developed, lack of international strategic partnerships with associations and industrial companies. The relevance of assessment procedures for achieving the aims of SPs is also showing drawbacks in internship dissemination and Moodle system support. Moodle system has some courses without the minimum requirements for content. Follow-up feedback is lacking formal approach in a systematic manner (e.g., mid-semester surveys), and continuous quality assurance needs improvement. Some of the SP needs (e.g., ISO conformity tests for Textile materials) are fulfilled only through an agreement with RTU. ERASMUS+ mobility outcomes are seldom. The Module system is still in development (around 30% completed).

### For Food processing SP. Positive aspects.

The indicators and the aim of the SP are relevant and achievable. The SP maintains the coherence between the outcomes of the study programme and the results of the study subjects. The SP clearly complies with the needs of the regional labour market. IT resources for online mode study process assurance and the development of digital skills for teachers and students are provided. Guest lecturers and industry experts take an active role in the implementation and improvement of the study processes and the content of study courses. Various study methods are used for the implementation of the SP. The study programme maintains student-centred learning and teaching and is highly valued by students, employers and graduates. RTA employs highly qualified staff lecturers and visiting lecturers with competencies and expertise in their field. RTA offers professional development opportunities for academic staff, engaging lecturers in scientific work, and offering to participate in seminars, conferences, courses and mobility activities. Collaborative publications and participation in scientific conferences are positive. Students are involved in practical and research activities, internal RTA grants or other research projects. Employers are satisfied with prepared specialists; they are involved in the SP development process.

For Food processing SP. Negative aspects.

The number of incoming and outgoing mobility students is zero. The subjects such as Food conditioning and preservation and Food safety must be improved by adding new courses, at least elective. Some laboratories (e.g. Microbiology) need more equipment-centred on student work (kits for students) than on the type of analysis as was presented during the visit.

Fashion Design and Technology. Positive aspects.

The indicators and the aim of the study programme are relevant. The SP maintains the coherence between the outcomes of the SP and the results of the study subjects. Various traditional and innovative study methods are used for the implementation of the SP. The SP maintains student-centred learning and teaching and is highly valued by students, employers and graduates. The study, informative, material and technical provision are good. The requirements of state education and professional standards have been met. The SP is compliant with the RTA strategy. Director of the SP Fashion Design and Technology personally participated in the development of the new professional standard for the designer of textiles and leather products. Material and technical provision complies with the requirements of the SP. The qualification of the teaching staff is good and complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. Close cooperation with Latvian (RTU) and foreign universities. Students have the opportunity to get involved in solving practical problems in separate study courses (applying the PBL method). Teaching staff and students are involved in RTA, Latvian and international projects, research work and other activities promoting students' qualifications. Successful implementation of distance learning during the Covid-19 crisis. The necessary IT resources to develop digital skills for teachers and students are provided. Mobility of academic staff by ERASMUS+ exchange programme is high. As Gerber software is one of the most commonly used by the industry it is important to note that RTA is the only educational institution having it in Latvia. Laser technologies laboratory is giving contemporary opportunities for textile processing. RTA employs highly qualified academic staff, and visiting lecturers who have the requested competencies and expertise in their field. RTA offers professional development opportunities for academic staff promotion activities, engaging lecturers in scientific work, and offering to participate in seminars, conferences, courses and mobility activities. The number of publications and participation in scientific conferences is very good.

Fashion Design and Technology. Negative aspects.

English language skills (both of academic staff and students) are still insufficient. Mobility of students by ERASMUS+ exchange programme is rather low. Laboratories need equipment for the testing and research of textile materials and final products. The content of the study courses "Material science I" and "Material science II" has to be improved providing deeper information about textile fabric structure, properties, mechanical behaviour, and standardised testing methods relevant to the clothing and textile industry. The number of enrolled students is stable, however, to ensure sufficient financing for the SP, the number of students should be increased. The practice room with sewing equipment is quite small, just enough for a small group, it may become a limitation in future.

## **I - Assessment of the Study Field**

### **I - Assessment of the Study Field**

#### **1.1 Management of the Study Field**

##### **Analysis**

1.1.1. The objectives of the SF are defined on the basis of the strategic planning documents of the EU and Latvia, the Latgale region and the RTA: documents "Europa 2030". The RTA Strategy positions itself as a regional development centre preparing specialists necessary for the growth of

Latgale, Latvia and the European economy. National and international labour market not yet acquired - lack of international cooperation with associations and industrial companies. Currently, more Regional approaches for strategic development have been pursued.

SPs comply with the main directions of the strategic development of the RTA by offering research-based interdisciplinary study programs aimed at the acquisition, application and development of innovative technologies, an attractive and modern study and research environment, preparing competitive specialists for the regional, increasing the quality of studies. Cooperation and partnership between business and academic research environments are seen in research papers: (<http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/JRESA/article/view/5400>; <http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/HET/article/view/4388/4406>; <http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/HET/article/view/4394/4414> etc). Several projects are presented (e.g., Kraujutiene, I., Silicka, I., Gaile, S., Bernāne, I. (2020) Research to Conduct Technological Process of Production for Plant-based Products and Develop New Recipes for the Recipient of the Service SIA "Nature Line". Innovative (Eko-) technology, entrepreneurship and regional development. 29.09.2020. 6th International Conference) also cooperation in internship could be seen in SER Annex 14 (9 companies for Fashion Design and Technology and 12 for Food Processing).

One of the goals of the SF is to develop the scientific research activities of the academic staff using a motivation system (higher payment for new papers), slightly promoting the patenting of scientific results and the introduction of innovative products into production. Management noted: 'In this study direction, there is high potential to get patents, but this is only a first-level programme. Maybe it could be possible if we develop a bachelor programme and heighten scientific output'.

It is clearly defined about the improvement of the content of study courses based on the research results of the academic staff, the latest findings in the theory and internship of the field and its related sciences: The Journal of Regional Economic and Social Development and HUMAN. ENVIRONMENT. TECHNOLOGIES. The International Scientific and Practical Conference is a platform for that.

Another goal is the establishment of a laboratory complex for the performance of SF compliant research.

1.1.2. Strengths are clearly and perfectly defined in SER: compliance with the requirements of state education and professional standards; strong strategy, attracting specialists working in the industrial companies (at least 10 of them with decent experience - SER Annex 12); internship agreements, enough number of academic staff has a doctoral degree (11 of 38, or 28% - SER Annex 9); International scientific conferences are organized: "Environment. Technology. Resources"; cooperation with universities; material and technical provision fully complies with the requirements of the SPs, etc.

One of the strengths is saying "academic staff and students use ERASMUS + mobility opportunities, incl. postgraduate internships", but SER Annex 15 is showing no progress, also SER Annex 16 shows ERASMUS+ mobility only for Fashion Design and Technology SP students (only 4 students in 2014-2018 period).

The listed weaknesses, threats and opportunities are fully recognised.

1.1.3. A new study administration model was approved by the RTA Senate on 27 January 2015 establishing a Study Field Council, which includes all study programme directors. It is a bit confusing as in the text of SER, point 2.1.3, it is written that a Study Field Council was created while in SER Annex 4 a Study Direction Board is presented. It is clear to assume both are the same as in Latvian they are translated as "Studiju virziena padome". The organisational structure of the SF consists of the Faculty Council (which consists of Faculty management, study field directors, professors and student representatives), Study Field Council (which consists of study programme directors), Study Field Self-Assessment Working Group (consists of the study programme directors, technical staff and

student representatives) and Study Field General Meeting (all teaching, technical and administrative staff). Employer, professional association and alumni representatives make up a Board of Experts for Study Direction.

From the meetings with programme directors and academic staff, it is clear that the management structure together with corresponding SPs is oriented towards the development of the SF, and decision-making takes place efficiently. It should be noted that the support provided by the administrative and technical staff is great and ensures all the needs of the SPs. Academic staff and programme directors emphasized that they are supported very much, they have resources for student mobility, research activities, publications, participation in conferences, etc. The management structure is logical and functional as there are no apparent “blind spots” or excessive overlaps of functions.

1.1.4. In the SER point 2.1.4, it is stated that “RTA has developed and implemented procedures for the recognition of competencies acquired outside formal education or acquired through professional experience and the learning outcomes achieved in previous education”. Contracts (SER, Annex 7) are standard and include all necessary norms and regulations regarding the compensations if the SP would be discontinued, etc. The competition is good (approx. 2 - 3 students per place). The assessment of students' achievements and learning outcomes is logical and effective. RTA has all the necessary information for student admission on its webpage. They have good cooperation with employers and social partners and share information with all stakeholders. They have students from different fields whose previous education establishments were recognized. Usually, there are 2 categories: prior experience and formal knowledge (prior bachelor/master's and years of professional experience) and also graduates from schools. The system for evaluation of student achievements and learning outcomes is according to the SP course requirements (through Moodle System).

1.1.5. RTA has clear principles and procedures for assessing the achievements of students. The requirements for the assessment of study results are incorporated into the study course programmes which are placed on RTA e-course website [ekursi.rta.lv](http://ekursi.rta.lv). They can follow the progress of students' study, splitting the examination of the results of formative assessment during the semester (at least 40% of the assessment) and assessment at the end of the study course (60%). Students' independent work is assessed in the form of summative assessment. In the SER it is written that “All information about the summative assessment of study results is available to students in the LAIS environment, where each student has access. The results of formative assessment are only partially available on the RTA Moodle website [ekursi.rta.lv](http://ekursi.rta.lv).” Students have the right to request explanations and to challenge the assessment provided in the Regulations. RTA has established the principles of academic integrity and mechanisms for their observance.

The relevance of assessment procedures for achieving the aims of SPs is showing drawbacks - assessment of Moodle content requirements (e.g. the course “Basics of production economics” has some information that does not correspond to management requirements), outcomes of internships agreements are seldom that could be the effect of COVID-19.

1.1.6. The principles of academic integrity are governed by the Senate-approved regulations. RTA takes measures to control and prevent plagiarism during formative assessment. For final study research works RTA uses the unified computerized plagiarism control system. RTA uses the plagiarism tracking system PlagScan, which controls the materials uploaded to the study website [ekursi.rta.lv](http://ekursi.rta.lv), conference administration website [conferences.rta.lv](http://conferences.rta.lv). and on the free access website [journals.rta.lv](http://journals.rta.lv). In the meeting with academic staff, teachers explained that they also use other systems like PLAG.lv. RTA takes care of the principles of academic integrity implementing the necessary measures to promote the development of the internal culture of the academy.

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

1.1.1. Latvia's processing oriented sectors of the economy: the manufacturing, textile and food industries are interconnected with SP. The planned implementation of the SP corresponds to the aim, tasks, RTA Strategy, development needs and development trends of the society and the national economy. Patents are not promoted due to the first level programme (From Management Meeting).

1.1.2. Strengths are clearly and perfectly defined in SER, and all of them were checked. Academic staff widely use visiting opportunities.

1.1.3. The management structure is suitable for the development of the SF and decision-making. Management is efficient, and the support provided by the administrative and technical staff ensures all the needs of the SPs corresponding to the SF.

1.1.4. RTA has procedures for the recognition of competencies acquired outside formal education or acquired through professional experience and the learning outcomes achieved in previous education. Possibilities to transfer to a bachelor's programme are seen.

1.1.5. RTA has clear principles and procedures for assessing the achievements of students. The requirements for the assessment of study results are incorporated into the study course programmes ([www.ekursi.rta.lv](http://www.ekursi.rta.lv)).

1.1.6. RTA has and uses the unified computerized plagiarism control system PlagScan. Academic staff additionally uses other anti-plagiarism systems (like PLAG.lv).

### **STRENGTHS:**

1. The study aim is strategically right. The planned implementation of the SPs corresponds to the aim, tasks, RTA Strategy, development needs and development trends of the society and the national economy.
2. The system of procedures is clear and sustainable.
3. The uniqueness of both SPs (college level).

### **WEAKNESSES:**

1. National and international labour market to be developed, lack of international strategic partnerships with associations and industrial companies.
2. Students from SP Food Processing are not using ERASMUS + mobility opportunities. Mobility measures and Internship agreement outcomes show low outcomes that could be the effect of COVID-19.
3. The relevance of assessment procedures for achieving the aims of SPs is also showing drawbacks in internship dissemination and Moodle system support. However internship dissemination could be limited during COVID-19

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

### **Analysis**

1.2.1. RTA has developed a decent assurance system (all quality metrics mentioned, SER is publicly available - [https://2021.rta.lv/pnzs/?action=view\\_pzs&record\\_id=5&way=13](https://2021.rta.lv/pnzs/?action=view_pzs&record_id=5&way=13)). It contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes (RTA\_Programmu\_attistiba\_konsolidacija\_2018.pdf) at least formally. Progress in implementing the accreditation / licensing recommendation plan was checked during the meeting. Analysis of survey results was checked during the meetings with students. Analysis of study literature was checked during the Tour to Moodle platform, and analysis of study courses content is showing strong content. Evaluation of teaching staff is taking place annually.

RTA has a common document management system. This system includes all internal regulation

documents. The new workdesk and workflow management system are under development. It is gonna be ticket-based both for students, employees and staff workflow.

Mobility measures and Internship agreements show low outcomes that could be the effect of COVID-19. Professional standards are fully corresponding to study content. Study courses are implemented with a problem-based approach (PBL); as it was explained during the meetings, it is an industry case that is seeking a solution. Student achievements are great with a lot of outcomes.

1.2.2. The procedures for the development and review of the SPs of the SF and the feedback mechanisms (including feedback to students, employers, and graduates) have been defined and they are mostly logical, efficient and available for all stakeholders. Nevertheless, some study courses have outdated literature and some Moodle content, e.g. the course "Basics of production economics", has some information that does not correspond to management requirements.

On the other hand, students consider less important courses, such as "Interrelationships between the Environment and the Human Personality", and "Introduction to Humanities". Students consider less relevant courses to be less important, for example, "Introduction to Humanities" - Food Processing SP.

New programme development is based on internal collaboration where a new workgroup is created involving academic staff, administrative staff and students. There is a well-defined path on how programmes are being proposed, developed and approved. As it was noted during visitation and available information in SER development and project management of grants and other activities that are outside of the scope of the direct study process but are adjacent to it are done in a systematic manner taking into account principles of quality management. There is a lack of sufficient proof that continuous quality assurance regarding the study process is taking place including tailoring within reasonable levels of the study curriculum in accordance with students' previous experience, skills, knowledge and interests as the RTA in some cases was struggling to provide proof of improvements that followed after student feedback. Therefore RTA should reconsider the ways how they are collecting actionable information from the student body and review its implementation of principles of student-centred learning. Some of the practices that RTA should consider is the implementation of mid-semester surveys so that students can see for themselves how their opinion is being taken into account in study processes on the go. Or, alternatively, semi-regular student group meetings with study program management in order to discuss news, announcements and other questions related to the study process, quality and curriculum. Also, study course descriptions do not fully reflect the actual study content of the courses - for example - in some courses primary (obligatory) literature can exceed a realistic and reasonable amount that can be read by students given ECTS amount or is actually additional reading. A suggestion would be to rework those course descriptions in order to reflect correct pages, chapters, and articles that are obligatory reading and remove those listed readings which are de facto supplementary.

However, it was worth noting that the student body within the study direction is relatively small and in this case, low student numbers enable more agility and adaptability of curriculum and other study process-related questions by enabling more direct and informal feedback methods. In conclusion, RTA collects all necessary feedback from employers, graduates and students, yet in some of the cases, it seems that follow-up on this feedback is lacking as RTA was struggling to provide the necessary proof of following actions.

1.2.3. The mechanism developed in RTA for submission of student complaints and suggestions is effective as it was investigated during the meetings with the students, promotes the implementation of improvements, students are informed about such opportunities and receive feedback which was clarified during the meeting with students. They noted both formally (papers version) and informally (WhatsApp chats, informal meetings with the director of the programme).

All internal documents are available to students via an internal web server. RTA has a well-defined pathway for how the submission of complaints and suggestions is being conducted. There are clear areas of responsibility and institutions where students can submit suggestions or complaints by nature of their inquiry. A quality system requires the person in charge to record complaints and suggestions and to inform the relevant staff and the process supervisor. The Student Council plays an active role in ensuring the efficiency of this process by providing - for example - "trust email" for students who seek to submit complaints in alternative ways. Students, in general, are informed about such opportunities to submit inquiries and receive feedback.

1.2.4. The statistical data collection mechanism established by RTA is efficient and ensures regular collection and analysis of information on the SPs corresponding to the SF. RTA collects various information - student attendance; employment data from the State Employment Agency; data on qualification of the academic staff and students; graduate, and employee survey data. All collected statistical data are being analyzed by RTA. Although the level of information collection is at a good level, RTA should seek more ways on how actionable information is being collected as it struggles with providing sufficient proof on how collected feedback information is being acted upon, for example, by organizing discussions with employers, graduates or collecting feedback from internship supervisors. In general, graduates are valuable resources for the Academy and they should be leveraged more - by seeking ways to include them in the study process after finishing their studies; for example, by providing internship placement opportunities to current students, guest-lecturing, study trips or any other ways. Several courses were added to SP, and employers are satisfied with SP content. Also, students and graduates are assessing SP content as successful.

1.2.5. The information published on the website of RTA about the SPs and the SF corresponds to the information available in the official registers (VIIS, RTA and E-platform "ekursi.rta.lv"), providing applicants and students with important information that is published in the Latvian language. For Fashion Design and Technology SP [https://2021.rta.lv/rta\\_istenotas\\_studiju\\_programmas?sp\\_id=28](https://2021.rta.lv/rta_istenotas_studiju_programmas?sp_id=28), and Food Processing SP [https://2021.rta.lv/rta\\_istenotas\\_studiju\\_programmas?sp\\_id=73](https://2021.rta.lv/rta_istenotas_studiju_programmas?sp_id=73), for courses <https://ekursi.rta.lv/course/index.php?categoryid=2> .

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

1.2.1. The internal Quality Assurance System contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes, at least formally. SPs are efficiently improved. QA is showing overall good progress in implementing the accreditation / licensing recommendation plan.

1.2.2. The procedures for the development and review of the relevant SPs are good, but SPs have the feedback mechanisms for follow-up issues (so follow-up is mostly informal).

1.2.3. Students are satisfied with complaint mechanisms, and their feedback.

1.2.4. Based on Annex 8 statistics collection mechanism is good. The mechanism of feedback is respected - several courses were added to SP, and employers are satisfied with SP content. Also, students and graduates are assessing SP content as successful. The collection mechanism is good, but follow-up feedback shows a lack of student, graduate and employer participation.

1.2.5. LAIS - [www.lais.lv](http://www.lais.lv) and Ekursi are checked and mostly correspond to information availability.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

Professional standards fully correspond to SP content and are respected by industrial partners.

Students are mostly satisfied with the feedback from SP directors.

Students, graduates and employers are assessing SPs content as successful.

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

Moodle system has some courses without the minimum requirements for content.

Internship outcomes are rather weak.

Follow-up feedback is lacking formal approach in a systematic manner (e.g., mid-semester surveys), and continuous quality assurance is dangerous.

### **Assessment of the requirement [1]**

- 1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

RTA management is ensuring improvement and development of SPs. Based on SER, online documents, open registers and meetings with responsible persons.

- 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

RTA has a decent document management system which assures the quality of SPs. Publicly available information meeting results with staff and QA team.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

There is a well-defined path on how programmes are being proposed, developed and approved. Meeting results with management, staff and QA team. Development results, analysis of SP content.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

RTA collects necessary information about students' results and publishes them. Analysis of outcomes, meetings with employers and graduates

- 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

RTA academic staff planning is regulated in a decent number of documents and the results are good. Meeting with management, staff and QA team. Analysis of SER report.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Good collection and analysis of achievement information. Students, employers and graduates

are mostly satisfied with the process and efficiency of academic staff. Necessary funds are available. Analysis of SER report, meeting with staff, QA and management. Analysis of students' feedback. Detailed analysis of funds available from SER report.

- 7 1.6 - The higher education institution/ college ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its quality assurance systems.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

SPs are efficient and continuously improved. Some minor drawbacks of QA in Moodle system support and internship dissemination. There is a lack of sufficient proof that continuous improvements following systematic stakeholder feedback are being implemented. (according to visit and SER 2.2.4., 2.2.1.)

### 1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

#### Analysis

1.3.1. Redistribution of the financial support for funding scientific and or applied research is not divided by study fields but is allocated to RTA for the provision of scientific activities. and/ or artistic creation is defined and implemented and it is effective. Funding of science base is stable, National research programmes are increased x3 in 2020. Total funding is stable. Expenditure library collections significantly decreased in databases (from 15000 to 3000 in the last years). But according to management, it is now funded by the Government. Full papers are available both in the library and remotely.

Funding for RTA Student Council is 0.5% approx. 12 000 Eur yearly. Study costs of 2200 Eur per student are appropriate, both SPs have a similar cost structure.

1.3.2. The infrastructure resources are approx 109 m2 of premises, material and technical support - computers with internet, furniture, wi-fi, projectors, interactive whiteboards (8 pcs.). Laboratory equipment is sufficient (SER Annex 20) - for fish, meat, bread, milk products, also microbiology laboratory. High level of sufficient equipment for the Textile program (SER Annex 20, Laser, Digitizer, Steam, 3D design, etc.). During the Tour, it was perfectly discussed about the purchase of materials by visiting facilities. Observance of available methodological and informative material for students (both Food and Textile SP - reports about safety, use of material, methodological guidance, information about course etc.). Clarification about the procedure of technical and material support discussed.

During meetings with SP directors, it was investigated that some of the Fashion Design and Technology SP needs (ISO conformity tests for Textile materials) are fulfilled only through an agreement with RTU.

1.3.3. RTA has developed a system/procedure for the improvement and purchase of methodological and informative provisions. Library resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of the study field.

Some capacity issues for Fashion Design and Technology SP were investigated during the Tour of the Historical building (max capacity of practice facility [room for student practice] for Fashion Design and Technology SP students). A special exhibition room for Textile student achievements (in front of the Practice room) is also used for different programmes, so it might be an overlapping issue. The practice room for Textile students is rather small (around 60m2) with limited places (seat places) supported by equipment (around 15 tables). While the chemical laboratory of microbiology has enough capacity. The food facility (different building away from the main building and new) also has plenty of working places.

1.3.4. ICT solutions used to ensure the study process are appropriate and effective on Moodle electronic study site [ekursi.rta.lv](http://ekursi.rta.lv) has a decent level of content. New literature is available in course content. Also, books are possible to order, at least in the database 47 books are presented (also received a list of them in 7 pages). Distant learning is not provided yet. Moodle system has a precise QA requirement of "26.08.2020. Studiju padomes sēdes lēmumu (protokols Nr.17)" for minimum content.

Library premises are suitable for people with reduced mobility. The library fund (Table 2.3.3.2.) looks promising. Full papers are available for students both remotely and in the library. A lot of new books are available (list presented) in Latvian and English. All databases are available from home. Regarding literature sources, they change very quickly and these books are available to download for course needs. They have an old assessment system, with reliable support. Very strong infrastructure (observed during the tour), while some capacity issues were investigated (max capacity around 20 students).

During the library Tour, it was difficult for the Library staff to show the latest books from the presented list in the Database. So, probably the newest literature is not available offline on the shelves, it should be ordered directly by students from the database.

1.3.5. RTA has several systems for ICT solutions: Main system Moodle and Microsoft Teams platform, with Office 365 opportunities. RTA uses the Moodle system in the study process and student attendance is also recorded in the Moodle environment. RTA Regulations on lecturers stipulate that for each study course the lecturer develops a description of the study course, which includes study course materials, which cover the theoretical material of the study course, students' self-examination tasks, tasks for independent work, learning outcome evaluation criteria/materials. The lecturer places the study course materials on the study course website [ekursi.rta.lv](http://ekursi.rta.lv), where a study course template is developed, including questionnaires that the lecturer can use for feedback after the completion of the study course (SER, paragraph 2.3.4.). For distance learning during Covid-19, the MS Teams platform was available for students.

During the expert visit, the teaching staff noted that there were no insurmountable technical difficulties in ensuring the distance learning process. Technical support has always been promptly provided by IT support staff when needed. Lecturers indicated that Zoom or Microsoft Teams communication tools are used for the learning process (SER mentions Microsoft Teams or Google Meet). According to the assessment of the teaching staff, the distance learning process has a negative impact on practical skills acquisition because it prevents effective use of certain teaching methods which are important for practising counselling, observation, etc. however, this is not related to the technical provision of the distance learning process.

According to SER (paragraph 2.3.4), the teaching staff has an opportunity to receive individual consultation and training for work on RTA communication platforms and the lecturers have used it regarding Microsoft Teams.

During Moodle tour attendance issue was discovered - issues with attendance system mutual support between Moodle and Teams.

1.3.6. The qualifications of academic staff in the study field are ensured by applying the RTA system competition and assessment. Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the quality of work have been developed. There is a special procedure set up to motivate the academic staff for career development and engagement in research by providing extra payment.

Current study field plans regarding the attraction of teaching staff can be found in Annex 3 Development plan of the study field PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING (2021-2027):

Attract at least one highly qualified specialist, one PhD holder in the textile and clothing technology field to implement a field training course in SP "Clothing Design and Technology". (till 2027)

At least one highly qualified specialist, one PhD holder in the food technology field for SP “Food processing”. (till 2027)

On the basis of concluded cooperation contracts, guest lecturer involvement in the provision of the study process is continued in organizing lectures, practical work, masterclasses, workshops, and seminars. (till 2027)

RTA academic staff planning issues are regulated in the number of documents (accessible through [https://2021.rta.lv/studiju\\_kvalitates\\_vadibas\\_sistema](https://2021.rta.lv/studiju_kvalitates_vadibas_sistema)), including:

Operation and Development Strategy of RTA 2016-2023

Academic Staff Development Guidelines 2018-2023

Regulations on planning, registration, control and payment of RTA lecturers’ methodological developments and scientific research

Procedure for planning and accounting of workload of RTA academic staff

Procedure for assessing the quality of work of RTA academic staff

Regulations on academic positions at Rēzekne University of Technology

Development plan of the study field PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING (2021-2027)

RTA assistants, lecturers and assistant professors are elected for six years in accordance with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Professors and Associate Professors shall be elected for a term of six years, providing the conversion of a fixed-term contract into a contract of indefinite duration after the assessment of eligibility within the time limit set by RTA.

All vacancies for academic staff are advertised in open competition, published in the newspaper “Latvijas Vēstnesis”, and other information sources. Applicants' eligibility for the advertised vacancy is assessed in accordance with the Regulations on Academic Positions in RTA. To attract foreign teaching staff, RTA publishes advertisements on the Euraxes portal advertisements are placed on Euraxes. Currently, no elected lecturers from abroad were noticed. (<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/search/country/latvia-1077>).

Management is attracting staff with good experience from industry and graduates with the best result (some key lecturers are former students). In 2017 and 2020, some of the staff have renewed their doctoral studies to improve competencies. RTA is also providing international visits from abroad. It was investigated that there is a great demand from students for industry expert visits (employers), also industry experts are willing to provide visit tours or guest lecturers. The current staff was showing great experience and knowledge during the meeting.

1.3.7. Professional development is supported and evaluated through a 160-hour professional development program in “Higher education didactics” or “Innovation in higher education”. Directors of Food Processing and Fashion Design and Technology SPs are experts in standard development, Diplomas in chemistry and biology, and meat specialists. Project of packaging Nr.9.17/2020-12-1. Highly developed in the LLI-184 project as an expert in Food technology. All staff have decent training leading researcher has ERAF post-PhD [www.mdpi.com/2079-9284/7/3/51/pdf](http://www.mdpi.com/2079-9284/7/3/51/pdf).

Starting from 2018, the quality indicators of lecturers' work are aligned with the student-centred approach - some lecturers were removed due to feedback from students.

It is not a department, but institution-based. They provide English courses. Programs – internship for staff in companies for up to 200h. Additional remuneration for staff who prepare self-evaluation reports and activities, e.g. article writing, participation in conferences and others, including ones with students. All staff are elected every 6 years. Staff have to participate in didactics – ~100h once every elected term. Hirsch index 3 within the SF, for social sciences – 1 is required.

1.3.8. The academic, research and administrative workload of the teaching staff is balanced. RTA procedure has been elaborated in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 445 “Regulation on remuneration for teachers' work. Research workload was showing a decent quantity of scientific papers (SER Annex 12, 13) - at least 2 per year for elected lecturers, while a detailed

check of papers showed a lack of Q1 and Q2 papers, so the scientific contribution from an academic perspective could be improved.

Some misreporting is noticed in SER Table 2.3.7.1 is shown 37 academic staff with doctoral degrees, while SER Annex 9 it is shown 38 staff with doctoral degrees (11 of 38 are elected, 48%). Also, in SER Annex 9 one of the lecturer's positions/degrees is called "Prof.Mg" for the Food Processing study program (OSHA course) is probably incorrectly translated from Latvian (originally "professional master") and should be a master's degree "Mg. PH or Mg. OSH".

1.3.9. RTA has identified the necessary support for students and they are planning part-time students, and distance learning students. Libraries, study equipment and IT infrastructure is greatly discussed in Annex 20 and positively checked during the Tour. There is a lack of support for abroad students since programmes are not planned in English. Carrer platform is provided - <https://karjera.ru.lv>; individual study plan. Support for distance learning during Covid-19 was provided through the MS Teams platform. Part-time students are planned for the future.

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

1.3.1. Revenues are stable, Expenditure for library collections significantly decreased in databases, but full papers in one of the key databases (ScienceDirect) are available.

1.3.2. Strong infrastructure, only some rare SP requirements (ISO standard tests for Textile material) are supported with RTU agreement. Purchase of material, methodological, informative, etc. provision is adequate.

1.3.3. Resources are available to students and teaching staff. Purchase of material, methodological, informative, etc. provision was successfully supported.

1.3.4. Methodological and informative provision is good (Moodle). Library resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of the SF. While recently published books were not shown by library staff during the Tour.

1.3.5. RTA is using the Moodle system and MS Teams platforms.

1.3.6. Current staff are very qualified with great practical experience. Great possibility to attract guest lecturers from the industry. No lecturers from abroad.

1.3.7. The needs for professional and didactic development of the teaching staff are purposefully determined and measured. Professional development is supported and evaluated.

1.3.8. The academic, research and administrative workload of the teaching staff is balanced. A lot of papers are in ERIH plus databases.

1.3.9. Support for local students and distance learning during Covid-19 was implemented. There are plans for part-time students and distance learning in the future.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

1. Very strong infrastructure (observed during the tour).
2. The current staff is very qualified with great practical experience and participation in exhibitions, and industry events (especially in Fashion Design and Technology SP).

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

1. Some of the SP needs (e.g., ISO conformity tests for Textile materials) are fulfilled only through an agreement with RTU.
2. Capacity issues as a bottleneck (max practice facility capacity for Textile students) in case of future attraction of bigger groups on National and International levels.

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

### **Analysis**

1.4.1. The directions of applied research correspond to the development goals of RTA and are relevant for the SF and industry. Scientific-practical conference "Environment. Technology. Resources" is the platform for practical research (in 2021 <http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/ETR/article/view/6654>; <http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/ETR/article/view/6588>; <http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/ETR/article/view/6588/5346>); Also HET (Human/Environment/Technology) platform <http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/HET/issue/view/127/showToc> shows no papers regarding Food Processing and Fashion Design and Technology. SIE platform has good papers in Textile and Fashion Design. <http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/SIE/article/view/6408>. Still, there is a lack of Food Processing papers, this is also mentioned as a Weakness in SWOT analysis. But platforms are ensuring publicity and cooperation. Nevertheless, Regional and Economic development has some Food Processing papers from the director of the programme, and Students participating in projects - Annex 22. <http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/JRES/article/view/5398>, at least 8 papers were published over 3 years. SER Annexes 12 and 13 overall are showing a reasonable quantity of scientific papers for key personnel (Annex 12, 13). It is seen that a lot of papers do not have SPSS analysis, mathematics or not using modern advanced qualitative or quantitative methods (e.g. factor analysis, Analytical Hierarchy Process, Fuzzy logic, etc). Possibility to improve scientific contribution in academic research (fundamental). Virziena\_RP\_attistibas\_plans2013\_2023 is giving information about student participation in many projects.

1.4.2. Applied research and the outcomes (mostly applied) are integrated into the study process in the study programmes of all levels. SER Annex 21 is presenting a high amount of artworks for key personnel and participation in events and implementation of industry cases during practice.

Student participation in scientific and scientific-practical conferences is low - only 1 student participated in a scientific conference (Annex 22). 2.4.3 is arguing for more practical research than academic/ fundamental, while participation in practical implementation and workshops is seen, which could be also an example of commercialization.

They have requirements in scientific publication: for professors - 6 articles, for lecturers, assistants - not necessarily indexed in Scopus, WoS. They have their own proceedings which are indexed. Another requirement - is participation in staff Erasmus mobility. Staff have to participate in didactics - ~100h once every elected term. Hirsch index 3 within the field, for social sciences - 1.

The connection of applied research in the study field with the study process is logical and justified - scientific papers, and outcomes are covering topics from SP. E.g., in Food Processing SP, they have prototypes, a wide variety of packages, and many preparation equipment, using microbiology laboratory; have projects with Business Incubator (e.g. NATURE LINE - how to use lyophilization for product processing). 'Kotiņi' developed activities - offer to use food in their restaurants. Collaboration with foreign universities. HORIZON projects, conferences.

1.4.3. International cooperation in the field of applied research within the study field and the relevant study programmes is ensured and it is being purposefully developed. Projects mentioned in SER 1.4.3 (conferences, ESF project, ERDF, SEA, competition shows) have important content and contribute to SPs by employing lecturers, increasing the qualification of lecturers, improving foreign language skills, acquiring new cooperation partners and the opportunity to take over their experience. Lecturers can pass on the acquired knowledge and skills to their students. Future plans are adequate - cooperation with universities, distant learning, and a professional internship. Also, bachelor level opportunities at Bulgarian Food university are good.

1.4.4. RTA has developed effective mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and/or applied research. They are well-functioning and efficient. Support until 2020 was

400 EUR per year, but from 2020 - 200 EUR per year decreased for each research staff member to attend conferences / to be published in international scientific journals. "Regulations on Scientific Activities at RTA" are making scientific work mandatory. Overall it is seen that applied projects are preferred more than academic. One of the staff members has a patent but it is in a different field.

1.4.5. Students participate in projects - Annex 22, also 2.4.3 description ERDF, Rēzekne Municipality, LIAA. 16 students of Fashion Design and Technology SP, 18 students of Food Processing SP. Exhibitions in Latvia, master classes, workshops, Horizon projects and industry cases. Student participation is very effective in applied science (students participating in scientific-practical conferences) for both Food Processing and Fashion Design and Technology SPs. RTA management is planning to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research (academic research) for bachelor's programme.

1.4.6. Innovative solutions are applied in the SF which has a significant positive impact on the study process: Expert Council is created to promote SPs from the innovative perspective, and SIA Sonika as a member has "Brother" brand sewing machines, overlocks, and printers from Brother authorized distributors. SIA LaPizza is a member of the Expert Council of the Food industry. Students and graduates use the service provided by Rēzekne Business Incubator, PBL (problem-based solutions) No: LLI-184 (Latvija-Lietuva) "SalesLabs. Established the Eastern Latvia Technology High School (Rēzeknes High School), which promotes the connection and continuity of secondary and higher education in the fields of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, <https://atv.rta.lv/>). Collaboration with Laser laboratory for advanced Textile processing.

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

1.4.1. The directions of applied research correspond to the development goals of RTA, quantity is adequate and is relevant for the SF and industry. Possibility to improve staff scientific contribution to academic research.

1.4.2. The connection of applied research in the SF with the study process is logical and justified. Outcomes of applied research are plenty, examples of collaboration with industry and participation in many projects are provided. Student participation in scientific and scientific-practical conferences is low.

1.4.3. Good international cooperation in the field of scientific research and/or applied research is observed among universities with staff participation. Nonetheless, there is a lack of international scientific cooperation with associations and industrial companies.

1.4.4. RTA has developed effective mechanisms (motivation system) for the involvement of the teaching staff.

1.4.5. RTA has developed mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students in applied research. They are very efficient, and a lot of students are involved in applied research.

1.4.6. Innovative solutions are present (laser, PLB, Incubator innovations, etc.).

#### **STRENGTHS:**

1. A lot of applied research outcomes (workshops, exhibitions, events).
2. A lot of students are involved in applied research and projects.

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

1. There are no weaknesses.

## Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The directions of scientific-practical (applied) research showing great outcomes and development, they are relevant for the study field and industry: analysis of SER, meetings with students and academic staff; analysis of projects, conferences, ESF project, ERDF, SEA, competition shows, exhibitions and Tour to the facility.

## 1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

### Analysis

1.5.1. RTA cooperates with the institutions from Latvia for internship (Annex 14: 9 for Fashion Design and Technology SP, 12 for Food Processing SP), Events Annex 22 (EU night Events 7 2014-2021), Career days, scientific conferences, international institutes, visiting lectures, study tours in textile companies: SIA Sonika, SIA NEMO, SIA Technical Textiles, SIA EcoEmi, SIA Firma Jata, SIA Gefa Latvija, ORKLA, SIA Gaross, SIA Spectre Latvia, AB Utenos trikotažas (Lithuania), Proflin (Estonia); In the food companies: SIA Rēzeknes gaļas kombināts, Z/S Ķotiņi, SIA Vlakon, SIA Lekon, SIA Margret, Z/S Liepkalns, AB Biržu Duona (Lithuania), recommendations for research topics (entrepreneurs, Bank of Latvia). Latvian Federation of Food Companies (LPUF), Rēzekne Municipality and plenty of universities RTU, LU, DU, etc. The cooperation partners are selected in accordance with the specific features of the SF.

1.5.2. RTA cooperates with institutions from abroad. However, data about the ERASMUS+ programme (SER Annex 16) is showing only 4 students in 2014-2018 for Fashion Design and Technology SP, and no students during the Covid19 period (2019-2022). Good cooperation with universities: Vilnius University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania; Kaunas University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania; Utena University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania; Vilnius Academy of Arts, Lithuania; Tallinn University of Applied Sciences, Estonia; Northern Lithuania College, Lithuania; Assen Zlatarov University of Burgas, Bulgaria, etc. Providing internship places for students.

RTA takes part in local associations which, they believe, are part of international associations (from meeting with management). There is room for improvement. They have widened Erasmus+ collaborations, but have not yet paid attention to industrial associations. They are now evaluating possible target countries.

1.5.3. RTA is not attracting foreign students but has developed a system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff from abroad within the SF (using the EURAXESS platform to attract foreign staff); the system is not effective due to the fact that the SPs are offered in the Latvian language only, which is a limitation to attract foreign staff. Statistics are showing no foreign students and staff (Annex 15). But it is important to mention SP "Manufacture and processing" SP ERASMUS+ shows lecturers from Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Poland, and Turkey taught within the framework of mobility (Annex 17), also the high level of mobility of staff abroad (from the SF "Production and Processing" [34 in and 176 out]. The teaching staff is also widely participating in mobility. Management is pointing to Demography as a challenge, they are focused on the Latgale region, and now their marketing activities are focused nationally, it's difficult for foreign students, as this is not a bachelor program.

It is important to remember that they have only 1st level programs, therefore, there is still room for improvement. Also, there is a regional transportation problem - for example from Krāslava getting to

Rēzekne is troublesome.

As those are 1st level programs, it is hard to find foreign partners as not everywhere 1st level programs exist. They cooperate with bachelor programs, but it is not easy. RTA has a strategic partner this year to help staff and discuss with staff to define one strategic partner in each SF/program. But mobility is not weak for one reason: they are small entrepreneurs and professionals and they can't find time for that. Possibility for mobility activities in the future could be internships and work placements.

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

1.5.1. High level of cooperation with the Regional institutions.

1.5.2. There is room for improvement in cooperation with International associations and foreign companies. Erasmus+ exchange collaboration is widened, but it is not yet paid attention to industrial associations and companies. National and international internships have not yet developed.

1.5.3. RTA is not attracting foreign students, the attraction of the teaching staff is not providing any results, no foreign students and staff (Annex 15). But it is important to mention many guest lecturers from foreign universities (Annex 17).

#### **STRENGTHS:**

1. Great collaboration with Regional institutions and international universities.

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

2. Current cooperation with international associations and foreign companies is rather weak. ERASMUS+ mobility outcomes are seldom.

### **Assessment of the requirement [3]**

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

SER showed good local cooperation and international relations with universities. Whereas meeting with employers indicated relations to be rather formal. Cooperation with foreign associations and international companies has to be developed. As this study field contains only first level professional study programmes offered only in Latvian, the weak International cooperation does not affect this assessment.

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

### **Analysis**

1.6.1. The recommendations provided have been fully implemented. The contribution of the RTA to the analysis of recommendations and their application to the specifics of the SF and the corresponding SPs is evident. New courses in SP Fashion Design and Technology; new professionals (SER, Annex 6 for the SP) - from Latvia 4, from Lithuania 7, from Estonia 7 [in total 15], cooperation agreement RTU and LLU renewed in 2019; future study possibilities; 6 projects with students. New laboratory for Food Processing (SER Annex 18).

In the evaluation of changes of the SPs corresponding to the SF, future development for students in Fashion Design and Technology after 3 years (Bachelor) is a solution to previously underdeveloped further education opportunities.

#### Fashion Design and Technology:

The issue with the limited equipment for the field, including scientific opportunities for further development in cooperation with local, national and international industry and professional associations in the study field was resolved - New laboratory 2015 (ERAF 2010/0117/3DP). IT equipment - AutoCad, SPSS; New textile workshop and its collaboration with ARPC (East Latvia Creative Services Centre). Textile laboratory agreement with RTU.

Agreements with LTRK, RUB, Latvijas Dizaineris, RKTAC (design), NVA agreements, internships and excursions (16) mostly in design. Fashion exhibitions (11). Projects like NVA, Interreg V-A Latvia - Lithuania 2014-2020, and conferences, Fashion and design, art exhibitions and workshops [15, 27]. Interdisciplinary research and publications now have a connection to fashion design (e.g. Annex 13: at least 7 during the last 5 years).

The issue with a small number of academic staff with professional experience and/ or education in fashion design was resolved (at least 4 of them in key courses with decent experience - 7 years, Annex 12).

One of the recommendations, mentioned in Annex 18: Nr.8. Module system, is still being developed. Management noted that now 30% of studies are ready for the remote studies. They are now waiting for regulation from the ministry and during the summer they will decide on future forms of studies. Also, they plan to renew some master's programs and facilitate incoming foreign students. They also have plans for modules in English. There is room for a new potential module system with Utena University.

#### Food Processing:

Course changes - Meat 5 CP, Milk 5 CP, Vegetables 3 CP, Beverages 3 CP. "Quality management" and "Food production technology and equipment" balance - now QM have 3 CP.

Two new courses - NPD 1 CP and "Food product packaging" 1 CP are created. Changed in schedule - for IT, Biochemistry, Nutrition management. Possibility to continue education.

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

Recommendations from previous assessment procedures were taken into consideration.

#### STRENGTHS:

Most of the recommendations are successfully implemented and periodically supported.

#### WEAKNESSES:

The Module system is still in development (around 30% completed).

### **Assessment of the requirement [4]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

A great implementation of previous recommendations: analysis of development strategy and SER (Annex 18 and others); meeting with Management, Directors and Students.

## 1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

Moodle system has some courses without minimum requirements for content. Quality Management and Directors of the SPs should pay more attention to the content of Moodle courses in order to meet requirements.

### Long-term recommendations

The real Internship was not sufficiently diversified, so experts recommend improving internship dissemination through partnership networks. Regional internships should be strengthened. National and international labour markets could be developed through the promotion of internship opportunities for students. The lack of international strategic partnerships with international associations and foreign companies should be eliminated. As for International associations, many of them like <https://ensa-eu.org>; <https://ehpm.org/>; <https://www.effost.org/default.aspx>; <https://www.iseki-food.net>; <https://effca.org/>; <https://www.eppa-eu.org/> etc., could establish mutual technology and scientific transfer. At the National level, the partnership with associations (e.g. HORECA) could be established promoting more possibilities for student outcomes, popularisation and representation of end-users for Food companies.

There is a great demand from students for industry expert visits (both large and small employers associations), also industry experts are willing to provide visit tours or guest lecturers. Opportunities for industry expert visits should be provided and developed.

Attract more students in order to promote regional development. Part-time education is a great instrument to attract more students, and it could be funded by LIAA as Regional development innovation. Currently, some capacity issues were investigated and should be considered for future development on a National and International level (max practice facility capacity of Fashion Design and Technology and Food Processing SPs students) for bigger groups in case of intensive promotion of Part-time education. Also, some of the SP needs (e.g., ISO conformity tests for Textile material) are fulfilled only through an agreement with RTU and could be the future bottleneck.

Seek ways to promote ERASMUS outgoing exchange for RTA students, e.g. Q&A with students who participated in the exchange, experience stories etc.

Ensure the development of transferable competencies (teamwork, foreign language competencies, etc.) throughout the study program using different learning methods. Rework course descriptions in order to reflect correct pages, chapters, and articles that are obligatory reading and remove those listed readings which are de facto supplementary so study amount corresponds to actual course content and ECTS amount requirements.

Reconsider other ways to efficiently collect actionable feedback from the student body - e.g. midterm surveys, regular student meetings with programme directors etc.

Graduates are valuable resources for the Academy and they should be leveraged more by seeking ways to include them in the study process after finishing their studies; for example, by providing internship placement opportunities to current students, guest-lecturing, study trips or any other ways.

The module system is still in development (around 30% completed) and requires finalization in the future.

## II - "Food processing " ASSESSMENT

### II - "Food processing " ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. The SP Food processing, having the code of the study programme according to the Classification of the Latvian Education - 41541, type and level of the study programme - First-level professional higher education study programme, qualification level to be achieved NQF/LQF - 4/5, amount of credits 100 CP and 150 ECTS. Qualification first level professional study programme complies with the Cabinet Regulation No 332 of 13.06.2017, "Regulations on the Classification of Education in Latvia "and with Cabinet Regulation No.141 "Regulations on the first level professional higher education state standard". However, the director of SP participated as an expert in the LOSP working group for the development of the professional standard " Food Production Specialist" and this is very good. " Food Processing" program is fully compliant with the study field.

2.1.2. The aim of the SP is in accordance with the requirements of the labour market (title of the degree being Food production specialist profession standard, code 216310) and the requirements of 4th level of qualification or 5 LQF level. The objectives of the SP are interrelated with the programme's aim, to theoretically and practically prepare specialists for work in the food sector, to develop general skills or soft skills such as communication, team working, leadership, problem-solving, etc. At the same time, the students are prepared to follow further studies such as bachelor level. The learning outcomes of the programme are all interrelated with the aim of SP and the market requirements for the food specialist.

Admission requirements in the study programme take place according to Law on Higher Education in Latvia. The applicants must graduate secondary education level and are admitted based on 3 centralized state examinations: mathematics, Latvian language and a foreign language (English, German or Russian, according to the applicant's choice). Additional points are applied to the winners of the competition, graduates of Eastern Latvian secondary school of Technology and holders of the Junior Achievement Latvia Certificate.

The duration of the SP is 2,5 years for full-time studies and 3 years for part-time extramural studies. Both programmes are running in the Latvian language. Taking into consideration the curriculum and the subjects of the SP the duration is appropriate to obtain the necessary skills and competencies for work in the food industry and according to the learning outcomes of the SP.

The SP provides students with the opportunity to obtain all of the above mentioned. The aims and objectives of the study programme are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA. The study programme complies with the needs of the market and development trends in society and the strategy of the RTA.

2.1.3. According to the new professional standard which was totally revised in 2021, the RTA SP Food Processing was also revised taking into consideration the latest requirements of the food industry. The corrections are related to the aim, tasks and study results (learning outcomes) which now correspond to the new standard and the curriculum was improved in the General part adding courses such as "Starting a Business", "Environmental and Civil Protection" and "Food production technologies" courses are combined in 2 modules, namely "Plant Origin Food Production Technologies" and Equipment" (11CP) and "Animal Origin Food Production Technologies and Equipment" (14 CP). Based on the recommendations of employers, the course "Development of New Food Products" was already in the SP but the topicality and the increase of credit points number were recommended to be included in the Rezekne Business Incubator, which is clearly in the students` benefit. The corrections are welcomed and well justified.

2.1.4. Economically, SP corresponds to Latgale strategy directions which aimed to increase the income in the region and to LIAS 2030 priority of “Innovative and eco-efficient economy”. Compliance with the labour market needs is clearly demonstrated and is ensured by cooperation with employers and various food federations and associations. The SP, which complies with “Food Production Specialist”, is unique in Latvia. The other two academic institutions offer to study at bachelor level or first level professional educational studies in the SF. The RTA study programme provides educational succession for secondary professional education (3rd professional education level “Food Production Technician”) and it can ensure the possibility to continue studies for the 5th level professional qualification (Bachelor degree). Analyzing the data of the labour market, RTA found out of 9 graduates of this SP 1 continues to study in another study programme in RTA, 2 have established their own companies and 6 work in full/part cycle food companies, and all of them are food industry specialists. The dynamic of student numbers is around 35 students per academic year and applicants are mainly working people who already received education in other fields. The justification is fully demonstrated.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

#### **CONCLUSIONS:**

The aims and objectives of the SP are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA. The study programme complies with the needs of the market and development trends in society and the strategy of the RTA. The study programme ensures that students understand the whole food production technologies and equipment.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

1. The indicators and the aim of the SP are relevant and achievable.
2. Food Processing ensures that students understand the whole food production technologies and equipment.
3. The SP clearly complies with the needs of the labour market.

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

There are no weaknesses.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The content of the SP Food Processing fully complies with the Cabinet Regulation No 512 “Regulations on the State Standard for First-level Professional Higher Education” and the occupational standards of the profession Food Production Specialist, Level 4 of professional qualification.

The descriptions of study courses are complete and comply with the regulatory requirements. The content of the study programme was developed in cooperation with the industry professionals and follows the tendencies of the labour market. The SP was constantly reviewed and updated accordingly. The content of the SP ensures the achievement of the planned learning outcomes and the goals of the study programme. The SP - 100 CP, include General education courses -21 CP (21%), compulsory courses of the branch - 24 CP(24%), Branch specific profession courses including professional practice (16 CP) and qualification paper (8CP) - 51CP (51 %) and some elective courses - 4 CP (4%). The SP Food Processing is carried out as a full or part-time study program.

The set of study subjects of the SP is purposefully designed to develop students' abilities and

competencies in the field of food processing. The content is relevant to achieving the aims of a professional 4th level study program. Learning outcomes for the SP are identified in accordance with regulations requirements for level 4th and the expected study results of the subjects included in the study programme correlate well with the expected outcomes of the SP

Each study subject contributes to the realisation of several outcomes of the SP. Upon completion of the SP, all the intended outcomes of the study programme should be achieved.

The professional study courses are combined into two modules, i.e. "Plant Origin Food Production and Equipment" (11CP) and "Animal origin Food Production and Equipment" (14CP). Professional practice in the amount of 12 CP is also implemented. The content of the curriculum is made up of meeting the profession standard requirements, industry demands and students' attractiveness. The choice of elective courses is regulated by RTA and approved by the Study Council. Based on students' recommendations several courses were added to the content of SP, such as "Sensory Evaluation of Food Products" or "Cooking Technologies and Equipment". The students are familiarised with those requirements at the beginning of their studies.

However, there are some topics which are not fully covered such as "Food Conditioning and Preservation" and "Food Safety", which are very important nowadays for the food producers. Although they are partially covered by various subtopics in the contents of food technologies, food packaging and food microbiology courses, the students in food processing have to understand more about food conditioning, food preservation and food safety principles, definitions, methods and techniques (equipment) destined to these issues. In general, each step of handling, processing, storage, and distribution affects the characteristics of food which may be desirable or undesirable. Thus, understanding the effects of each conditioning and/or preservation method and handling procedure is critical for food processing.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. There are various teaching methods employed in the implementation of the SP – lectures, literature review/analysis, case studies, laboratory work, practice work, and independent work.

The students appreciate the organisation of work labs and practice. The students and the graduates positively evaluated the teaching methods applied. They appreciate having smaller groups, thus giving them the possibility to discuss and collaborate better.

The students have an opportunity to participate in different projects and applied research and they were very excited to develop new food products, and new packs their works are nicely exposed in the Research Center which we visited. The assessment criteria for each subject are very clear and they correspond to the study results, are reasonable, verifiable and available to the students at the beginning of the study program and also at the beginning of each study course. For the fulfilment of practice tasks, RTA concluded agreements with local food companies of the Latgale region to offer practice places to their students. The examples given in the self-assessment are convincing.

There are many changes due to the COVID pandemic in the organisation of the study process. The usage of IT tools was widely implemented and some movies with lab works have been developed. During the COVID-19 pandemic situation, RTA moved the whole study process to the online mode. The students evaluated the quality of studies in the online mode as very high. The teachers provide online lectures and classes using the Zoom platform or Microsoft Team. All study materials are available on the Moodle platform. Remote access to library resources is ensured for all the students. The tests and exams are held online via Moodle.

The activities in the class are being evaluated – discussions, and group works. The other forms of assessments are written exams, tests, case-study analysis, and essays.

The student-centred principles are applied through the individual approach to the student's needs, taking not account their prior level of knowledge, choosing the topics for the research and the final study project and qualification paper. For the improvement of the content and the implementation of

the study programme, the opinion, needs and recommendations of various stakeholders are considered. The Study programme councils have several employers as members who actively participate in describing tendencies in the labour market. SP director actively participated in the professional standard setup. The student surveys revealed useful recommendations for curriculum improvement and their ideas were adopted for example for new courses.

Academics, students, alumni, and employers are involved. Meetings with the graduates and employers demonstrated once again the SP content and organisation are very appreciated.

ERASMUS+ mobility is encouraged by RTA management and for the academic staff of SP there are several cooperation agreements presented, but for the students of this programme, there is no mobility yet.

2.2.4. The procedure for organising the internship at the RTA is regulated by the “Regulations on internships at the RTA” approved by the Senate. The regulations define the types, goals, and tasks of practice. The SP stipulates an amount of 16 CP = 24 ECTS (16 working weeks), which is in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No.141. The full-time students must attend an introductory practice of 4CP in the second semester and a Production practice of 12 CP in the 5th semester. For part-time students, an internship is planned: the Introductory practice of 4CP in the 5th semester and the Production practice of 12 CP in the 6th semester of the third study year.

Professional practice is focused on the fulfilment of study results specified in the SP, and students must use the acquired knowledge and previous experience and the acquisition of practical skills in manufacturing food companies.

There are methodological instructions for the practice and some examples of companies in the self-assessment report which are convincing. The students have also the possibility to practice in their workplace having two supervisors (from the company and from RTA). During the practice, students obtain necessary factual materials for the development and defence of the qualification paper. They submit a diary and a practice report which reflect the course of practice. This practice helps the student to fulfil the study results and goals. In the self-assessment report are given several companies which provide internship opportunities to the students and this is good. However, during our meeting with employers, Orkla Company was present, and they declared they are very satisfied with the graduates of this program, but it was not clear which is the number of internships offered for the students of SP.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. The topics of students` final thesis are relevant to the food production specialist. Most of them are realized in different food companies in which the students making their practice works and are clearly related with some new food product development or improvement of an existing one, improvements of some processes on the food chain and comprising of necessary calculation of raw materials, food products, auxiliary materials, select appropriate equipment, represent technological scheme, planning the production site with the place of equipment. There are some examples in the SER which are convincing. The evaluation of the qualification paper consists of certain criteria which are very relevant to the field and the score obtained in the last two years was 8, which is a good indicator of the quality of the papers and their presentations. According to the statistics presented in the self-assessment material the qualification papers are related 100% to various food companies in Latgale. The companies are closer to their place of residence or are their working places, being both larger and smaller companies. The topic of their qualification papers is chosen by students depending on their interests and how this could help them in their professional life. The papers are checked also for plagiarism and a pre-defence is realized before a session which takes place in front of the State Qualification Examination Committee where there is a discussion with specialists about the industry problems and their solutions in the food processing field. In this committee, half of the

members are representatives of professional organizations or employers and their recommendations represent good feedback for the next few years. This methodological approach is very good and useful for all the participants in this process.

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

The content of the SP aims to the achievement of learning outcomes and the goal of the SP. The description of study courses, requirements for internships, qualification paper, and evaluation criteria are very clear and in compliance with the state regulatory enactments and RTA internal regulations. The traditional and the newest teaching and assessment methods are implemented. The opinion and recommendations of various stakeholders are taken into account for the improvement of the study programme.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

1. The provision of necessary IT resources for online mode study process assurance and the development of digital skills for teachers and students.
2. Guest lecturers and industry experts take an active role in the implementation and improvement of the study processes and the content of study courses.
4. The SP maintains the coherence between the outcomes of the study programme and the results of the study subjects.
5. Various study methods are used for the implementation of the SP.
7. The study programme maintains student-centered learning and teaching and is highly valued by students, employers and graduates.

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

1. The number of incoming and outgoing mobility students is zero.
2. The subjects such as Food conditioning and preservation and Food safety must be improved by adding new courses, at least elective.
3. Some laboratories (e.g. Microbiology) need more equipment centred on student work (kits for students) than on the type of analysis as was presented during the visit.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable.

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

#### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The goal of this SP is to provide Food Production specialists, which would enable the student to acquire the level of knowledge, skills, competencies, and skills that would ensure the competitive operation of organizations and their independent growth based on the excellence of their performance, as well as to train competitive entrepreneurs and leaders by developing creative thinking, with the ability to generate innovative ideas and create added values.

To achieve this goal RTA has a base for the studies that include highly qualified academic staff, different teaching methods and practical activities such as internships, laboratories work, group

works, participation in research grants, etc. Also, the informative base for the study programme is sufficient, students have access to the RTA library with enough books in Latvian and the English language for the food processing technologies (dairy, meat, gastronomy, etc.), access to online databases (Web of Science, JSTOR, EBSCO), journals and catalogues, different subscriptions, etc., which are suitable for the study process.

Everything regarding premises is excellent, auditoriums are of different sizes suited for different types of study processes – personalized or for joint group learning. Each auditorium and room for student work are equipped enough for supporting these different types of learning.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. The calculations and figures provided in the SER regarding the funding available to the SP and the use of these for the implementation process are convincing. The number of students currently enrolled in this SP is sufficient for providing a qualitative study process without financial losses, for example, 35 students were enrolled in the 2019/2020 academic year, 31 in 2020/2021 and 35 in the 2021/2022 academic year. Based on this, the financial base is sufficient for implementing the SP. The available resources can provide students with the opportunity to achieve the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies set by this study program. These resources are sufficient for providing good study quality in the future as well.

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

During the site visit and the meetings, employers, alumni, and students themselves praised the quality of studies and how the academic staff is helping to develop new skills, helping in the teaching and practical activities. The practical work in different food companies and in the faculty's labs give the student's necessary competencies for a Food Production Specialist.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

1. Opportunities for students to be involved in practical and research activities, such as involvement in internal RTA grants or other research projects.
2. Highly qualified specialists in the field are preparing students to meet the goal, skills and competencies of the SP.
3. Employers are satisfied with prepared specialists; they are involved in the SP development process.

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

No weakness was identified.

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

SP has the highly qualified academic staff, enough funding for the teaching and laboratory work and enough informative resources.

## 2.4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

2.4.1. The composition of the teaching staff is clearly designed to provide students necessary skills and competencies for the Food Production Specialist profession. It is very interesting the approach of RTA to increase the competencies of the SP teaching staff by learning from each other. They have several teaching teams formed by an experienced practitioner and researcher with practical work experience, and several good examples are given on p.115 of the SER.

The planning issues of RTA academic staff are regulated in RTA development strategy 2016-2023, RTA academic staff development plan 2016-2023, Regulation of academic positions, Regulations for lecturers, Procedure for evaluation of work quality of academic staff, etc.

SP teaching staff is composed of 19 lecturers having master's degrees, seven lecturers having a doctor's degree, 1 lecturer has a bachelor's degree in engineering (food industry), and 6 of the lecturers are also practitioners with long/sufficient professional work experience, one of the lecturers are studying at the doctoral programme. The qualification and compliance with the position criteria have been assessed by the competition commission, taking into consideration the qualification and education of academic staff, compliance with academic and practical work experience and the results of student surveys. 45% of the academic staff are leading specialists and professionals in the field, guest lecturers. The English language and IT skills are improved with the help of two big projects which are running in RTA, but still, there is room for improvement of English proficiency if we are considering during the visit most of the academic staff spoke in Latvian and a translation was needed.

2.4.2. During the reporting period, the composition and competencies of the academic staff have improved. The proportion of elected academic staff slightly increased from 50% in 2016 to 55% in 2021, and lecturers with PhD titles have also increased from 32% to 40%. In 2021 the composition of the academic staff of the SP is the following: Elected: 3 professors, 1 associate professor, 2 assistant professors, 9 lecturers and Visiting: 11 guest assistant professors and guest lecturers.

All the changes that have taken place to improve the development of academic staff quality. During the reporting period, there have been no significant changes in the teaching staff, except for the positive fact that new lecturers who graduated from the master's level programs have joined the teaching staff of the SP. All lecturers have considerable practical experience related to the themes and study courses. To ensure the coherence of the study program with the current tendencies and problems of the labour market, the professional program employs professionals with extensive professional practical work experience. Several examples given on p. 117 of the SER are convincing in this respect.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. The lecturers of the SP are actively involved in research activities by producing scientific publications and co-publications published in journals indexed in various databases. SP academic staff are engaged in scientific research and real estate management through two big projects which are running in RTA. Some academic staff have fewer publications or participation in projects as anticipated, but, as this is a first-level study programme, it might be considered sufficient.

2.4.5. All lecturers have considerable practical experience related to the themes and study courses. To achieve the learning outcomes, the cooperation among teaching staff is demonstrated through several aspects such as interdisciplinary cooperation of the academic staff, with good examples with 2 big joint projects and development of new food products courses taught by two very good professionally lecturers. Another approach used by the academic staff is joint publications,

cooperation among elected academic staff and visiting lectures with good examples provided on p.120 of the SER, and cooperation between teaching staff and support staff (ICT specialists).

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

Engaging lecturers in scientific work, and offering to participate in seminars, conferences, courses and mobility activities RTA promotes staff development skills and international cooperation with higher education institutions abroad

#### **STRENGTHS:**

1. RTA employs highly qualified staff lecturers, and visiting lecturers who possess the requested competencies and expertise in their field.
2. RTA offers professional development opportunities for academic staff promotion activities, engaging lecturers in scientific work, and offering to participate in seminars, conferences, courses and mobility activities.
3. Collaborative publications and participation in scientific conferences are positive.

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

There are no weaknesses.

### **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Documents are available in the appendices, which confirms that 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. See, the annexes Academic staff CV and Annex

### **2.5. Assessment of the Compliance**

#### **Requirements**

- 1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The SP is compliant with the State Standard for First-Level Professional Higher Education, 20/03/2001. Cabinet Regulations No.141, and Regulations on Academic and Professional Studies and Study Programs of RTA.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The professional standard for 4th level professional standard "Food Production Specialist"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Only in Latvian Language

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

A document is available in the appendices, which confirms that 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.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

A document is available in the appendices, which confirms that 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 (Annex 11).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

A document is available in the appendices, which confirms that the sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement (SER Annex 7).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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 (SER Annex 5).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

A document is available in the appendices (SER Annex 6).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

All the above requirements are met

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

The most requirements for the SP are met. Only minor deficiencies have been identified. The aims and objectives of the SP are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA. The SP complies with the needs of the market and development trends in society and the strategy of the RTA. The Food Processing SP ensures that students understand the whole food production technologies and equipment.

The content of the SP aims to the achievement of learning outcomes and the goal of the SP. The

description of study courses, requirements for internships, qualification paper, and evaluation criteria are very clear and in compliance with the state regulatory enactments and RTA internal regulations. The traditional and the newest teaching and assessment methods are implemented. The opinion and recommendations of various stakeholders are taken into account for the improvement of the study programme.

During the site visit and the meetings, employers, alumni, and students themselves praised the quality of studies and how the academic staff is helping to develop new skills, helping in the teaching and practical activities. The practical work in different food companies and in the faculty's labs give the student's necessary competencies for a Food Production Specialist.

All lecturers have good theoretical and practical experience related to the themes and study courses. To achieve the learning outcomes, RTA implements professional development measures based on the 2 big projects where the English language and IT skills of academic staff are improved. Engaging lecturers in scientific work and offering to participate in seminars, conferences, courses and mobility activities, RTA promotes staff development skills and international cooperation with higher education institutions abroad.

#### STRENGTHS:

1. The indicators and the aim of the SP are relevant and achievable.
2. Food Processing ensures that students understand the whole food production technologies and equipment.
3. The SP clearly complies with the needs of the labour market.
4. The provision of necessary IT resources for online mode study process assurance and the development of digital skills for teachers and students.
5. Guest lecturers and industry experts take an active role in the implementation and improvement of the study processes and the content of study courses.
6. The SP maintains the coherence between the outcomes of the study programme and the results of the study subjects.
7. Various study methods are used for the implementation of the SP.
8. The study programme maintains student-centered learning and teaching and is highly valued by students, employers and graduates.
9. Opportunities for students to be involved in practical and research activities, such as involvement in internal RTA grants or other research projects.
10. Highly qualified specialists in the field are preparing students to meet the goal, skills and competencies of the SP.
11. Employers are satisfied with prepared specialists; they are involved in the SP development process.

#### WEAKNESSES:

1. The number of incoming and outgoing mobility students is zero.
2. The subjects such as Food conditioning and preservation and Food safety must be improved by adding new courses, at least elective.
3. Some laboratories (e.g. Microbiology) need more equipment-centred on student work (kits for students) than on the type of analysis as was presented during the visit.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Food processing "**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Food processing "**

## Short-term recommendations

To improve the knowledge in food conditioning and preservation and food safety topics.

To ensure lab work kits of each student in the Microbiology and Biotechnology lab.

## Long-term recommendations

Consider the possibility of offering participation in international mobility programmes (Erasmus+ or other programs) for the students.

Find more national strategic partners who can promote this study programme not only at the regional level. Involve foreign professors for longer cooperation.

To improve the English language proficiency of teaching staff and students.

## II - "Fashion Design and Technology" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Fashion Design and Technology" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. The SP Fashion Design and Technology has the code of the study programme according to the Classification of the Latvian Education - 41542, type and level of the study programme - First-level professional higher education study programme, qualification level to be achieved NQF/LQF - 4/5, amount of credits 100 CP and 150 ECTS. Qualification first level professional study programme complies with the Cabinet Regulation No 332 of 13.06.2017, "Regulations on the Classification of Education in Latvia" and with Cabinet Regulation No.141 "Regulations on the first level professional higher education state standard".

2.1.2. The title of the SP is in accordance with the educational classification procedure in Latvia and the recommendations of the previous accreditation and shows a connection with the SF. The aim of the SP is in accordance with the requirements of the 4th qualification level (5th LQF level) professional higher education in the design of textiles and leather products, specialising in fashion design, also in accordance with the requirements of the labour market (Textile and leather products designer profession standard) and the requirements of the 1st level professional higher education (educational standard) in designing. Study results are defined in accordance with the descriptions of knowledge, skills and competencies corresponding to level 5, provided by the Cabinet Regulation No. 332 "Regulations on the Classification of Education in Latvia" of 13/06/2017. The tasks set for the implementation of the aim envisage ensuring the compliance of the educational program with the regulation of studies and science in the Republic of Latvia. The objectives of the SP are interrelated with the programme's aim, to theoretically and practically prepare specialists for work in the textile and clothing industry. The aims and objectives of the SP are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA. The synergy of theory and practice in the field of textile and leather product design, specialising in clothing design, assures the development of certain skills and competencies. RTA applies a study process based on a student-centred approach, which envisages the development of students' independence, entrepreneurship and initiative. An essential precondition for successful achievement of study results is the contingent of enrolled students.

Admission requirements in the SP take place according to the Law on Higher Education in Latvia.

The applicants must graduate secondary education level and are admitted based on 3 centralised state examinations: mathematics, Latvian language and a foreign language (English, German or Russian, according to the applicant's choice). Additional points are applied to the winners of the competition, graduates of Eastern Latvian secondary school of Technology and holders of the Junior Achievement Latvia Certificate. The vast majority of applicants have mastered the previous education programs well and are sufficiently prepared for studies in the first level professional higher education program.

The duration of the SP is 2.5 years for full-time studies and 3 years for part-time studies. SP is running in the Latvian language. Taking into consideration the curriculum, the subjects and the learning outcomes of the SP, the duration is appropriate to obtain the necessary skills and professional competencies in accordance with the requirements of the profession of textile and leather designer (specialisation clothing designer). The study programme complies with the needs of the market and development trends in society and the strategy of the RTA.

2.1.3. Director of the SP Fashion Design and Technology as an expert of the working group of the Council of Experts on Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Leather Products participated in the development of the professional standard "Designer of Textiles and Leather Products" with updated requirements for the professional qualification of a textiles and leather products designer. (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-164.pdf>). In 2021, the SP Fashion Design and Technology was revised; the aim, tasks and study results of the program were specified taking into account the recommendations of the study program accreditation commission experts and according to the new professional standard requirements (Appendices 5, 6). New study courses "Basics of planning industrial production collections" (in accordance with the recommendation of practice supervisors and employers), and "Basics of production economics" (based on the professional standard) were included in the SP.

2.1.4. The SP was developed on behalf of Latgale region textile industry clothing companies to provide specialists for the regional needs and economically corresponds to Latgale strategy directions which aimed to increase the income in the region and to LIAS 2030 priority "Innovative and eco-efficient economy". Compliance with the labour market needs is clearly demonstrated. The first level professional higher education SP, which complies with the professional standard "Textile and Leather Product Designer", specialisation Fashion Designer, implements only RTA; the SP is unique in Latvia. The RTA is the only educational institution in the country that prepares 5 LQF specialists in this field for companies in the light industry/ textile industry.

During the reporting period, the number of SP students did not change significantly and varied between 8-9 students each year (SER Annex 2). There are no students from abroad in the SP. Intension in the academic year 2022/2023 to admit students to part-time studies in order to attract working persons should be elaborated and implemented.

RTA annually analyzes the data of the State Employment Agency on RTA graduates. During the 2015 - 2021 period, out of 20 SP graduates of the SP: two graduates continue their studies in another SPs, four - work in another field, two - work in another design field, and six - work in newly established companies in the sector or work in Rēzekne business incubator in the pre-incubation period, four - work in medium-sized companies in Latgale.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The aims and objectives of the SP Fashion Design and Technology are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA. The SP

complies with the needs of the labour market and development trends in society and the strategy of the RTA. The study programme ensures that students are able to work as clothing product designers. The coefficient of the competition applicants for admission to the SP per one budget study place is sufficiently stable in the whole period among the admission indicators of the RTA, and it shows that students purposefully choose this SP. It is the only such professional qualification level program not only in Latgale but also in Latvia as a whole. However, the number of students in the SP could be enhanced.

#### STRENGTHS:

1. The indicators and the aim of the study programme are relevant.
2. The first-level professional higher education SP, which complies with the professional standard "Textile and Leather Product Designer", specialisation Fashion Designer, implemented only by RTA.
3. Director of the SP Fashion Design and Technology personally participated in the development of the new professional standard for the designer of textiles and leather products (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-164.pdf>).

#### WEAKNESSES:

There are no weaknesses.

## 2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

### Analysis

2.2.1. The content of the SP "Fashion Design and Technology" fully complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 141 "Regulations on the State Standard for the First Level Professional Higher Education" 20/03/2001 <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/6397-noteikumi-par-pirma-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitibas-valsts-standardu>. The descriptions of study courses are complete and comply with the regulatory requirements. The content of the SP was developed in cooperation with the industry professionals and follows the tendencies of the labour market. The content of the SP ensures the achievement of the planned learning outcomes and the goals of the SF. The SP - 100 CP, including: Comprehensive study courses - 20 CP (20%); Compulsory courses of the branch (professional field of activity) - 20 CP (20%); Branch-related (professional activity) specific profession courses - 56 CP (56%) (including professional internship - 16 CP (16%) and qualification paper - 8 CP (8%); Elective courses - 4 CP (4%).

The set of study subjects of the SP is purposefully designed to develop the abilities and competencies of students in the field of fashion design. Fashion design is a good base for starting up an own garment business and RTA has good achievements. The vast majority of graduation works are in newly developed design and marketing. At the same time, only one employment in the last 5 years in larger companies is for a reason that industrial production companies require a different sets of knowledge and designers are not required. Complementing SP with more focus on practical pattern making and production in future would add additional value to the SP for broader use. The content is relevant to achieving the aims of a professional 4th level SP. Learning outcomes are identified in accordance with regulations requirements for level 4th and expected study results of the subjects included in the SP correlate well with the expected outcomes of the SP. However, the number of study results of the study courses should correlate with the number of CP of the courses. Each study subject contributes to the realisation of several outcomes of the SP.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. Various teaching methods are used to implement the SP – lectures, literature review/analysis, case studies, laboratory works, practice work, and independent work. RTA implements a PBL method. Two study courses of the SP use the PBL method: “Apparel Design II” and “Practicum in Fashion Design II”. For the academic year 2022/2023 it is planned to implement this method in the study course “Design of Leather Products”. Students and graduates positively evaluated the teaching methods applied. Also, they appreciate having smaller groups, thus giving them the possibility to discuss and collaborate better. The assessment criteria for each subject are very clear and they correspond to the study results, are reasonable, verifiable and available to the students at the beginning of the study program and also at the beginning of each study course. Students are provided with feedback on the assessment of study results. The usage of IT tools was widely implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic period. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, RTA moved the whole study process to the online mode (in MS Teams, Zoom, etc.), the quality of which was evaluated by students as very high. Communication between students and lecturers also takes place by phone, e-mail, Skype and Whatsapp, e-course website (<https://ekursi.rta.lv/>). All study courses are available on the Moodle platform, however, not every course is fully completed in the Moodle. Remote access to library resources is ensured for all the students. To ensure the individual learning needs of students, individual consultations (20 hours per semester) are given.

The student-centred principles are applied through the individual approach to the student’s needs, taking into account their prior level of knowledge, choosing topics for their research and the final study project and qualification paper. To improve the content and the implementation of the SP, the opinion, needs and recommendations of stakeholders are considered. Academics, students, graduates, and employers are involved. The student surveys revealed useful recommendations and ideas for curriculum improvement. Also, the SP director actively participated in the professional standard setup.

The mobility of academic staff and students by the ERASMUS+ exchange programme is encouraged by RTA management. The number of outgoing and incoming academic staff is high (SER annex 17), while the mobility of students is low (only four outgoing and two incoming students during the relevant period; SER Annex 16).

2.2.4. The procedure for organising the practical internship at the RTA is regulated by the “Regulations on internships at the RTA” approved by the Senate. The regulations define the types, goals, and tasks of practice. The SP stipulates an amount of 16 CP = 24 ECTS (16 working weeks), in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No.141 and the purpose and tasks of the SP. The internship is organised as the “Industrial (Manufacturing) Internship” (12 CP) in the 4th semester and the “Qualification (Pre-diploma) Internship” (4 CP) in the 5th semester. Professional practice is focused on the fulfilment of study results specified in the study program. It aims to strengthen and supplement students' theoretical knowledge, improve professional skills and abilities, develop professional competencies in accordance with the requirements of the profession of textile and leather designer, and develop skills and abilities to conduct applied research in the field of textile and fashion industry. Professional internship tasks are linked to the SP tasks (Annex 8).

There are methodological instructions for the practice and some examples of companies in the self-assessment report. The provision of the SP internship place is a student's choice. But we see that in spite of RTA having cooperation contacts with production companies, only few were having students for their practice and thus indicates that practices in reality are taken outside companies that are recognised to be important for the industry. We suggest reconsidering the choice of the companies for practice in order to achieve a better know-how transfer.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. The topics of students` final thesis are relevant to the profession of textile and leather

designer. The thesis contains a theoretical part, part of the constructive and technological design of the model, an economic justification of the project developed, and a graphic part - visualisation of the project and the practical realisation of the product design. Assortment of the studied products is different as companies from various fields are represented. There is a positive tendency to use modern advanced technologies (laser processing of textile fabrics - marking, cutting; 3D printing) in the designed clothing, thus improving the production technology or saving resources.

The evaluation of the qualification paper consists of certain criteria which are very relevant to the field. The average evaluation of qualification papers by academic years is high enough: in the academic year 2014/2015 - 8 points; in 2015/2016, 2016/2017, in 2017/2018 and 2019/2020 - 9 points, in 2018/2019 - 10 points, which indicate successful study results and their successful presentation.

The final thesis, according to the Self-assessment report, are in the vast majority (90%) related to Latgale companies, these are both larger clothing manufacturing companies, such as SIA Nemo, SIA Spectre Latvija (Rēzekne branch), SMEs, such as SIA EcoEmi, SIA Quilt Art, and new companies founded by students in Latgale, such as Bencha Muude, ZKraft, SkaistumsS, etc. The companies are closer to the place of students residence or are their working places. The process of developing a qualification paper is controlled throughout the semester. The qualification is checked before the defence in the Unified Latvian Anti-Plagiarism System. No such cases were detected during the period considered. The defence of the thesis is organised in the form of an open session, where the State Qualification Examination Committee and each attendee can ask students questions, there is a discussion with specialists about the problems and their solutions in the field of fashion design. The work of the State Qualification Examination Committee and the awarding of professional qualifications take place in accordance with the "Regulations on State and Final Examinations at the Rēzekne Academy of Technologies (RTA)" <https://ieej.lv/limQj>.

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

The content of the SP "Fashion Design and Technology" fully complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 141 and aims to the achievement of learning outcomes and the goal of the SP and SF. The description of study courses, requirements for internships, qualification paper, evaluation criteria are very clear and in compliance with the state regulatory enactments and RTA internal regulations. The traditional and innovative teaching, learning and assessment methods are implemented. The opinion and recommendation of stakeholders are taken into account and necessary changes are being done to improve the SP.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

1. The necessary IT resources are provided to assure online mode study process and develop digital skills for teachers and students.
2. Mobility of academic staff by ERASMUS+ exchange programme is high.
3. The SP maintains the coherence between the outcomes of the SP and the results of the study subjects.
4. Various traditional and innovative study methods are used for the implementation of the SP.
5. The SP maintains student-centred learning and teaching and is highly valued by students, employers and graduates.

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

1. Not all courses are fully completed in the Moodle platform.
2. Mobility of students by ERASMUS+ exchange programme is rather low.
3. Laboratories need equipment for testing and research of textile materials and final products (even tensile properties are tested by a dynamometer provided for mechanical testing of metals).

4. The content of the study courses “Material science I” and “Material science II” has to be improved providing deeper information about textile fabrics structure, properties, mechanical behaviour, standardised testing methods relevant to clothing and textile industry.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable.

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

#### **Analysis**

2.3.1. To achieve the SP goals RTA has a study base that includes highly qualified academic staff, different teaching methods and practical activities, such as internships, laboratory works, group works, participation in research grants, etc. The informative base for the SP is sufficient, students have access to RTA library with enough books in Latvian, English and Russian languages for the fashion design and technologies, access to online databases (Web of Science, JSTOR, EBSCO, ScienceDirect, Scopus, LNB Digitālās kolekcijas, etc.), journals and catalogues, different subscriptions, etc., which are suitable for the study process. The library is accessible to people with reduced mobility. The library has two individual rooms where students can work seamlessly.

Everything concerning premises is excellent, lecture rooms are in different sizes, suited for different types of study processes – personalised or for joint group learning. As it is presented in the Self-assessment report, the lecture rooms are equipped with new and comfortable furniture, the air conditioners are installed, all the lecture rooms (100%) are provided with the necessary equipment, i.e. boards, screens, blinds, overhead projectors etc. All computers are connected through a computer network. Lecturers and students can use the open-access Internet and Wi-Fi network. CAD / CAE / CAM training class is available for students.

A potential limitation may be a small size of the practice room with sewing equipment.

Laboratories with wide range and unique equipment available and the rest of the laboratory work is provided under cooperation agreement with RTU. But the part of on-site available textile testing equipment is a limitation.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. SP funding sources consist of state budget funding and student tuition fees. Number of study places financed from the state budget is 10 for the SP “Fashion design and technology”. The tuition fee is approved by the decision of the RTA Senate for each subsequent academic year. The use of financial resources is in accordance with the distribution approved by the Senate. Expenditures for staff remuneration and financial provision for the SP are planned in proportion to the revenue in the budget. Funding of the science base and funding of research performance are not divided by study directions, but are allocated to RTA for the provision of scientific activities. Funding for RTA library collections is not divided by study directions, because often the library resources in the process of studies are used by students of several study directions. Funding for the student council is provided in the amount of at least one or two hundredth of the state funding for the study process and tuition fees each year.

There is a room for a closer cooperation with companies of the industry in enrolling existing

employees for upgrading in their carriers. But this will require a shift from design and marketing into more of a patternmaking and production. That may be achieved by reconsidering a selection of optional courses that gives more specialisation for future employees of sizable production companies and also attracting funds of private companies.

The number of students currently enrolled in this programme should be higher to provide a qualitative study process without financial losses. The available resources can provide students with the opportunity to achieve the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies set by this study program. These resources are sufficient for providing good study quality in the future as well.

More proactive tools of attracting students shall be used. Experts noticed dissonance between the large proportion of students who are mature persons willing to improve their professional knowledge to start up the business. At the same time student attraction activities are done only at Art school and Technical school. Graduates have been mentioned as a channel of attraction, but there is no targeted and proactive plan to address a wider base of potential students of the region through alumni. One case of a cooperation with Livani municipality was mentioned, but only 1 person out of the group has stayed because of difficulties to travel (inconvenient public transport). There are ideas, but solution must be found and more cities of the region and beyond shall be targeted, including North Vidzeme (Smiltene, Gulbene, Aluksne, Valka), East Zemgale (Jēkabpils), Latgale (Kraslava, Daugavpils, Preiļi). The more innovative distant learning tools and options might be used. SP director mentioned it as a perspective and it shall be envisaged as one of the future key success factors.

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

During the site visit and the meetings with different groups, employers, graduates and students themselves praised the quality of studies and how academic staff is helping to develop new skills and competences. The practical work in different clothing companies and in the RTA labs give the students' necessary competencies for a professional textile and leather designer.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

1. The study, informative, material and technical provision is good.
2. Opportunities for students being involved in practical and research activities such as involvement in internal RTA grants, research projects.
3. Gerber software for specialised pattern making available. As Gerber is one of the most commonly used by industry it is important to note that RTA is the only educational institution having it in Latvia.
4. Laser technologies laboratory of outstanding spread of opportunities

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

1. Number of enrolled students is stable, however, to ensure sufficient financing of the SP, the number of students should be increased. Attraction of students is to be considered with a better marketing plan among alumni, providing more distance learning options and reduction of travelling.
2. More textiles specific material testing equipment is needed. Currently laboratories of RTU are used, but in future in-house laboratories shall be enhanced.
3. Practice room with sewing equipment is quite small, just enough for a small group. It may become a limitation in future.

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Premises for teaching / learning of students are good. High level of sufficient equipment for the Textile program (SER Annex 20, Laser, Digitizer, Steam, 3D design, etc.). Purchase of material, methodological, informative, etc. provision was successfully supported. Observance of available methodological and informative material for students (Textile SP - reports about safety, use of material, methodological guidance, information about course etc.). Insufficient laboratory equipment is covered by partnership agreement with RTU. Insufficient laboratory equipment is covered by partnership agreement with RTU.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The composition of the teaching staff of the SP is designed to provide students with the acquisition of knowledge, skills and research skills in the content of general and branch study courses, achieving the study results specified by the SP, which correspond to the EQF level 5 knowledge, skills and competences specified in the Latvian education classification. The qualification of the teaching staff complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. All elected lecturers once during the election period receive professional development courses "Innovations in Higher Education".

The research and professional specialisation of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the SP covers all the main areas envisaged in the Textile and Leather Product Designer's Standard. SP employs 1 professor, 5 associate professors, 4 docents, 8 lecturers, 9 guest lecturers; 8 of the teaching staff are leading researchers and 5 researchers, 1 research assistant, 8 lecturers or 31% have a doctoral degree. 65% of the employed academic staff are elected to the RTA. 35% of the academic staff are leading specialists and professionals in the field, guest lecturers. Also, foreign teachers / experts within the framework of ERASMUS+ mobility are invited to teach certain topics. The number of outgoing / incoming staff is good. The study courses Fashion Design II (in academic years 2018-2020) Professional Practice II use a problem-based learning approach (PBL).

The English language and IT skills are improved with the help of two big projects which are running in RTA, but still there is room for improvement of English proficiency; it was considered during the visit, part of the academic staff of the SP spoke in Latvian and the translation was needed.

2.4.2. According to the Self-assessment report, the composition and competence of the academic staff have improved during the reporting period. Although the proportion of elected academic staff has only slightly increased (from 63% till 65%), the proportion of lecturers with a doctoral degree has increased from 22% to 31%. The synergy of teachers' pedagogical and scientific work has been significantly improved - 54% of the teaching staff are elected to pedagogical and scientific positions. All the changes in the composition of the teaching staff indicate the growth and development of the teaching staff of the program.

To ensure the coherence of SP with the current tendencies and problems of the labour market, the SP employs professionals with extensive professional work experience. The provision of SP has been supported for several years by cooperation partners abroad.

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. Staff actively participate in scientific conferences and publish scientific publications, including joint scientific publications with both Latvian and foreign researchers. Each member of the academic staff in the last 6 years has published at least one article in peer-reviewed editions (approx.  $\frac{2}{3}$  of academic staff have published at least 1 article each year during the reporting period (Annex 13) or

has artistic achievements or at least 5 years of practical experience.

2.4.5. The cooperation of the teaching staff of the SP is presented by several aspects of the cooperation characteristic of the specifics of the RTA activity: interdisciplinary cooperation of the academic staff (teaching staff of different fields is employed in the program), joint scientific activity of the academic staff (joint researches and publications), cooperation of elected academic staff - visiting lecturers, cooperation between teaching staff and support staff (especially ensuring distance learning), cooperation between lecturers and students (implementing remotely study process), cooperation of professionals in the field with those lecturers, for whom the Academy is the main place of work.

The ratio of teaching staff to students in the SP is slightly lower (11) than the Latvian average in short-cycle programs (13) and the OECD average (15). However, taking into account the professional orientation of the program and the inversion of financial risks, the number of fewer students promotes individual work with students and a student-centered approach to the study process.

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

Academic staff of the SP are of high qualification, have good theoretical and practical experience, and actively participate in conferences, researches, exhibitions, RTA grants, etc. To achieve the learning outcomes, RTA implements professional development measures based on the 2 big projects where the English language and IT skills of academic staff are improved. Engaging lecturers in scientific work, offering to participate in seminars, conferences, courses and mobility activities RTA promotes staff development skills and international cooperation with higher education institutions abroad.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

RTA employs highly qualified academic staff, visiting lecturers who have the requested competencies and expertise in their field.

RTA offers professional development opportunities for academic staff promotion activities, engaging lecturers in scientific work, offering to participate in seminars, conferences, courses and mobility activities.

Number of publications and participation in scientific conferences are very good.

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

There are no weaknesses.

### **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Fully compliant with the regulation and necessary qualification for the SP, highly qualified academic staff, and visiting lecturers who have the requested competencies and expertise in their field.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study program is compliant with State Standard for First-Level Professional Higher Education, 20/03/2001. Cabinet Regulations No.141, and Regulations on Academic and Professional Studies and Study Programs of RTA.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

In accordance with requirements of the 4th qualification level (5th LQF level) professional higher education in the design of textiles and leather products, specialising in fashion design

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

In Latvian only.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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 (SER Annex 11).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement (SER Annex 7).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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 (SER Annex 5).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

A document is available in the SER Annex 6.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Not applicable

### **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

All requirements set for in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are met.

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

The requirements for the Fashion Design and Technology SP are met. The experts found only minor deficiencies. The aims and objectives of the SP are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA. The SP complies with the needs of the market and development trends in society and the strategy of the RTA. The Fashion Design and Technology SP ensures that students are achieving an understanding of fashion design and textile technologies and equipment.

The content of the SP aims to the achievement of learning outcomes and the goal of the SP. The description of study courses, requirements for internships, qualification paper, and evaluation criteria are very clear and in compliance with the state regulatory enactments and RTA internal regulations. The traditional and the newest teaching and assessment methods are implemented. The opinion and recommendations of various stakeholders are taken into account for the improvement of the study programme.

During the site visit and the meetings with different groups, employers, graduates and students themselves highly praised the quality of studies and how academic staff is helping to develop new skills and competences. The practical work in different clothing companies and in the RTA labs develops the students' necessary competencies for a professional textile and leather designer. The participation in many exhibitions, visits of the experts from textile companies give the student's necessary practical experience and involvement for Textile industry.

All lecturers have excellent theoretical and practical experience related to the themes and study courses. To achieve the learning outcomes, RTA is engaging lecturers in scientific work, offering to participate in seminars, conferences, courses and mobility activities RTA promotes staff development skills and international cooperation with higher education institutions abroad.

Strengths of the SP:

1. The requirements of state education and professional standards have been met.
  2. The SP is compliant with the RTA strategy.
  3. The qualification of the teaching staff is good and complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments.
  4. Close cooperation with Latvian (RTU) and foreign universities in the implementation of SP, for example, Lithuanian (Vilnius, Kaunas, Utena, Telšiai), Estonian (Tallinn) universities of applied sciences, etc.
- Students have the opportunity to get involved in solving practical problems in separate study courses (applying the PBL method).
5. Teaching staff and students are involved in RTA, Latvian and international projects, research work

and other activities promoting students' qualifications.

6. Successful implementation of distance learning (during the Covid-19 crisis).
7. Material and technical provision complies with the requirements of the SP.
8. State-funded study places.

Weaknesses of the SP:

1. The insufficient number of students in the SP.
2. Insufficient external funding to supplement laboratory equipment, facilities and latest software.
3. The English language skills (both of academic staff and students) are still insufficient.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Fashion Design and Technology"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Fashion Design and Technology"

### Short-term recommendations

Refine study courses results that accurately reflect each specific study subject. The number of results should correlate with the number of credits in each subject. Use active verbs to define the results of the study subjects.

In cooperation with the largest companies of the industry, implement a series of lectures by experts of the companies in the professional topics. Look to it that practices take place in companies equipped with modern equipment and using innovative and up to date processes. Continuously update the list of companies with cooperation agreements with RTA and make sure the cooperation takes place.

Cooperating with Latgale region municipalities provide a sound plan to maintain the students, for instance by aiming reduction of travel and increasing ways of distant learning tools, including video demonstrations.

Complete all courses in the Moodle platform. Pay more attention to ISO standards in the study course "Material science II".

### Long-term recommendations

Implement hybrid studies with about 50% distant learning. Consider upgrading the programme to bachelors' study by enhancing the SP by strong focus on up-to-date digital pattern making as well as Economy of production specialised in the apparel industry.

Expand the range of study courses using innovative teaching/learning methods. Invest in enhancing laboratories with textile specific testing equipment.

Improve the digital and English language skills of the academic staff and professional competencies through internships in companies in the field.

Increase participation of lecturers and students in scientific conferences, projects, and shows-competitions outside Latvia, thus expanding the opportunities for cooperation and recognition of the RTA. More actively motivate lecturers and students to use ERASMUS + mobility.

Consider attracting students from wider geographical areas, including Vidzeme and Zemgale regions.

### 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
<p>R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:</p>	<p>Fully compliant</p>	<p>RTA management is ensuring improvement and development of SPs. Based on SER, online documents, open registers and meetings with responsible persons.</p>
<p>R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)</p>	<p>Fully compliant</p>	<p>The directions of scientific-practical (applied) research showing great outcomes and development, they are relevant for the study field and industry: analysis of SER, meetings with students and academic staff; analysis of projects, conferences, ESF project, ERDF, SEA, competition shows, exhibitions and Tour to the facility.</p>
<p>R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.</p>	<p>Fully compliant</p>	<p>SER showed good local cooperation and international relations with universities. Whereas meeting with employers indicated relations to be rather formal. Cooperation with foreign associations and international companies has to be developed. As this study field contains only first level professional study programmes offered only in Latvian, the weak International cooperation does not affect this assessment.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully	compliant		A great implementation of previous recommendations: analysis of development strategy and SER (Annex 18 and others); meeting with Management, Directors and Students.

### 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	Food processing (41541)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Fashion Design and Technology (41542)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

The opinions of the experts regarding any of the criteria or the applicable requirements are collaborative, there are no major dissenting opinions.

Some discussions about "R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensure the achievement of the aims of the study field" were observed. Experts had debates about the contribution of international associations, foreign companies and the lack of real internships to R3 "full compliance". Inga Zemdega as an expert from industry pointed out the significance of strong internships to the achievement of the aims of the study field. However, a really great collaboration with Regional institutions and international universities is seen. Also, the participation of many local companies in the development of the content of the study is confirmed, and employers are highly evaluating SP quality and student competence. So it was decided that improving the number of internships could be a recommendation "The real Internship was not sufficiently diversified, so experts recommend improving internship dissemination through partnership networks".