

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: ISMA University College

Study field: Management, Administration and Management of Real Property

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## Summary Assessment of the Study Field

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ISMA University study field "Management, Administration and Management of Real Property" (henceforward - study field) has clearly defined attainable goal, which well-suites the ISMA Vision, mission, and long term goals.

At the moment ISMA implements 5 programmes in this study field: one first level professional higher education programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate (41345)", 2 professional bachelor's programmes "Business Administration in Tourism (42345)" and "Business Administration (42345)", and 1 professional master's study programme "Business Administration (47345)", as well as 1 doctoral study programme "Business Administration (51345)". Main study implementation place is Riga, bachelor's study programmes are implemented additionally in the branches - Latgale (Daugavpils, Latvia) and Fergana (Uzbekistan).

All study programmes were designed and developed in accordance with the vision set by ISMA: "ISMA university of applied sciences is an internationally recognized, multicultural, and dynamic private university in Latvian and European higher education area, featuring excellence in education, research, and innovation".

ISMA uses the only private funds for study provision, the resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the study field are adequate.

The procedures for the development and review of the study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms are defined and they are logical. ISMA collects and analyses the information on study programmes of the study field on a regular basis and uses it to improve the study field.

ISMA is well equipped in the study process. All resources and study infrastructure is appropriate and available for every Latvian and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, and administrative block. The process of recruitment of lecturers is transparent and effective. ISMA uses appropriate measures for the improvement of the academic staff and lecturers are granted funding for participation in international scientific conferences and publishing of scientific papers, monographs and academic books. However, the description, terms and criteria of qualification improvement for teaching staff is not provided and described. A clear incentive system to ensure the qualification and quality of work of the academic staff has not been established.

ISMA has set up a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students. Student support is taken into account in the implementation of the study process in the ISMA.

ISMA has established strong cooperation with all stakeholders in the broadest sense. Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that formal procedures are limited. It is necessary to create formal procedures and describe how different stakeholders (students, alumni, personnel, employers, industry experts and organizations) can be involved in the development and management of the study field. In order to contribute to further improvement of the educational process, structures for partner involvement in the education implementation and attraction of teachers and foreign students need to be developed.

The information published on the website of ISMA about the relevant study programmes of the study field complies with the information available in the official registers. It provides important information for the candidates and the students and is published in Latvian, English and Russian.

The ISMA website ([www.isma.lv](http://www.isma.lv)) offers a very wide range of information for all levels of studies, i.e. bachelors, masters and Ph.D. A list of classes, regulatory documents, a register for study courses, etc. are freely accessible to anyone. More detailed information, relevant to students and academic staff is available in the Moodle system after authorization.

Despite the fact that some lecturers participate in various conferences, as well as ISMA organizes its own annual scientific conference, the scientific indicators are not high. The only few academic personnel of the programmes is engaged in research at the national and international level, national research programme projects, cooperation projects with local governments, and businesses. Efforts should be made to increase the number of scientific publications by focusing on publications in high-citation journals, rather than just conference proceedings, as well as to participate in more research projects and involve new researchers there.

All programmes have good perspectives for further internationalization, however, the possibilities for staff and student international exchange in programme-related areas currently are quite limited and should be widened.

The most important strengths of ISMA study field "Management, Administration and Management of Real Property":

- ISMA is well-equipped in the study process and has a good resource base.
- Higher level management has a strong vision about the future of the university.
- Strong cooperation with stakeholders, industry companies, and experts in Latvia and abroad.
- Supportive academic personnel.
- Student overall satisfaction with teaching and learning processes.
- Study programmes and courses are regularly updated.
- There are international and Latvian students.
- Students can participate in scientific conferences organized by ISMA.

Weaknesses:

- Low number of international lecturers in all study programmes.
- Literature and other sources included in the study course descriptions need to be updated.
- Lack of access to the modern scientific literature and databases.
- Not enough involvement in relevant scientific research activities such as project initiation, leadership and finance obtainment.
- Lack of new different teaching methods that allow obtaining the goal of the course.
- Lack of elective subjects in the master and doctoral study programmes.
- Low number of incoming students' mobility.
- Lack of professors with expert rights in Latvian Council of Science in this field.

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

### **Analysis**

The aims of the study field have been included in the ISMA Self Assessment Report (henceforward - SAR) (p. 38) which revolve around the development of study programmes and implementation of sector-specific knowledge. Especially the first aim "to develop the existing study programmes <...>" (p. 38) is university-centric and ignores the main beneficiary of ISMA - the student. Both aims lack clarity and clear connections with both strategic priorities of Latvia and ISMA's strategy for 2018-2023.

The administration structure of the whole ISMA HEI is explained in the document "Administrative Structure Chart", including 6 vice-rectors for studies, science, academic work, international relations, administrative work, and development and innovation. Study field management, thus, requires collaboration between the heads of departments and directors of study programmes. Additionally, heads of the study department and career center, vice-rectors for studies and research as well as other stakeholders are also invited to participate. The head of the study field is responsible for analysing the efficiency and optimisation of study programmes, organising joint meetings between programme directors, traineeships, coordinating academic staff's work, etc. Meanwhile, the directors of study programmes are responsible for the successful preparation and implementation of their study programmes. The joint meetings between the directors of study programmes are organized not less than twice a year. In case other support is needed, the decisions are brought back to the vice-rector for studies. The management of Fergana (and Latgale) branches is present in Riga too. The current structure that is described above enables the collaboration between study programmes, however, it seems that there is a lack of interaction with other departments, e.g. regarding scientific activities, projects, etc.

The admission of students is regulated by the document "ISMA University of Applied Sciences Admission Regulations for the academic year xx" which are compliant to the Law of Institutions of Higher Education. At the moment of this assessment, admission requirements for Year 2020-2021 and Year 2021-2022 are available. Admission requirements are also published on ISMA's website under the category "For Applicants" and "Admission". Admission regulations' document introduces general provisions, study programmes, general requirements for admission to study programmes, competition for admission to a study programme, admission to master's and doctoral study programmes, determination and notification of the competition results, matriculation and study contract conclusion, admission of foreigners, and regulation on studies at subsequent stages of studies. Special requirements for foreign students are also explained. These documents also explain the evaluation of non-formal education such as participation in students' competitions. Admission to Fergana branch follows the procedures approved by ISMA Senate. All procedures are logical and explained well.

ISMA has procedures for dealing with plagiarism in multiple ways. First, ISMA is a part of UL Unified Computerized Plagiarism Control System (SAR, p. 47). Second, plagiarism rules are explained in the provided document "ISMA University of Applied Sciences Procedures for the Organisation of Testing". In case of suspected plagiarism, the lecturer informs Study Department (in case of dishonesty in the exam), the Director of the study programme (in case of plagiarism in research paper/electronic examination), or Vice Rector for Studies (in case of the final paper/thesis). The consequences are also explained in the above-mentioned document about the procedures for the organisation of testing, leading to the need to re-take the exam, re-do the research paper, or dismissal of the student from the defence of the final thesis. However, there is no indication if the consequences or procedure differs based on the level of dishonesty, e.g. accidental mistakes in referencing compared to a fully copied work.

The information on the HEI website is provided in three languages: Latvian, Russian and English. The information in different languages is corresponding and main information about study programmes in all different levels is provided. However, the included information on different level programmes slightly differs, e.g. study plans are not included in the 1st level programme description. There is sufficient information provided for applicants, students, information about HEI itself. Some of the regulatory documentation is available only in Latvian language.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

At the moment ISMA implements 5 programmes in this study field: 1 first level professional higher education programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate (41345)", 2 professional bachelor's programmes "Business Administration in Tourism (42345)" and "Business Administration (42345)", 1 professional master's study programme "Business Administration (47345)", as well as 1 doctoral study programme "Business Administration (51345)".

Accordingly, resulting from the analysis, the management of the study field in general goes in compliance with all criteria: the aims of the study field are defined and attainable, the structure of the management of the study field is relevant; there are all necessary regulations for the enrolment and study process; plagiarism is the main focus of academic integrity; the information published on the website complies with the information available in the official registers. However, the aims of the study field are not clearly defined and the management structure is not very clear.

#### Strengths:

1. Clear admission system in place;
2. Administrative system is explained well;
3. There are procedures in place regarding the plagiarism and dishonesty of students;
4. The website is up to date and contains most relevant information.

#### Weaknesses:

1. The aims of the study field are not clearly defined, thus would require a revision to also align well with ISMA strategy and Latvia's strategic priorities. Additionally, Fergana and Uzbekistan specific needs to be taken into consideration;
2. The management structure does not clearly explain how horizontal collaboration (outside of study field) happens.

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

### **Analysis**

ISMA has established a quality policy, which is available in ISMA's web page (see: Quality policy). The policy includes general principles on quality management. Based on the best practice standards, the policy is only one element of Quality assurance system (QAS) and the main purpose of QAS is establishment of framework that ensures continuous improvement of study process and programmes. Also, based on the information in SAR, QAS in ISMA should be focused on setting and achieving balanced, measurable goals through effective and efficient leadership, the provision of high quality education services, resource management and performance-oriented activities. During the visit experts asked questions to management, study programme directors, academic staff in order to understand quality of framework in practice. Based on the answers, the maturity level of QAS is low, including:

1. quality is disconnected with ISMA objectives and goals. For instance, specific, measurable goals or KPIs on improvement of QAS are not available;
2. quality is not a shared responsibility but rather it is seen as department's responsibility. For instance, management did not demonstrate the goals of QAS or the knowledge about the systematic approach;
3. quality is distinct from corporate structure. It is not contained in compensation or talent management. For instance, there is no clear link between the compensation package and the quality of work;
4. technological capabilities are low. No digital solutions for maintaining of QAS have been mentioned or have been found, including business intelligence solutions on visualizing results of survey.

ISMA collects data and analyses it from surveys in all branches. However, interviews revealed space for improvement in terms of actions towards study field improvement based on the results of surveys. For example, there are no KPIs for quality level, no systematic approach to providing feedback on the results of surveys or improvements in study courses based on the information received from stakeholders.

The study programmes are monitored and reviewed via Programme Committees that involve student and employer feedback. However, the results of these annual assessments are not available. It would be beneficial to publish them in order to inform the respective stakeholders (academic staff, employers etc.).

Moreover, there is no clear practice on the annual assessment of academic staff in terms of employee competencies and based on the quality criteria. Even though there is academic staff recruitment policy, it does not ensure clear, transparent and fair remuneration systems encouraging scientific activities and incorporating technological resources in the study process.

Some stakeholders (students) are engaged regularly, while others (alumni, employers) are not engaged every year, which does not provide real-time suggestions. For instance, during the visit, nobody from alumni and employers (including representatives from branches) did not remember about survey from ISMA.

ISMA does not collect and analyse data like drop-out rates, enrolment, graduation, or employment statistics from other HEI's for quality assurance purposes and benchmark.

During the site visit, experts also identified issues regarding the quality of cooperation between master programme study director and academic staff. Director did not demonstrated the approach on coordination of content of study courses among academic staff in order to minimize the risks of overlapping, irregularities etc.

Additionally, the compliance with ESG Part 1 criteria 1.8 "Public information" can be improved as for numerous study programmes the respective learning and assessment procedures, minimum pass grades, information about employability of graduates and expected programme learning results are not available in ISMA homepage. From the perspective of the prospective students, clear and accurate information about the study programmes is crucial when making a decision to apply and enrol in a particular programme. Thus, it would be of importance to follow the information published in the homepage and ensure that it is comprehensive and accurate.

ISMA's QAS is partly implemented in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) Part 1. There are many elements that must be improved (please, see in analyses).

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

ISMA has developed quality policy and has implemented some parts of quality assurance system in accordance with the requirements set in ESG Part 1. Student surveys are conducted regularly and data is analysed yearly, but there are many weaknesses preventing the continuous improvement of the relevant study programmes.

Strengths:

1. Open to improve the quality system and to build a quality culture at ISMA;
2. Regular student surveys are in place, also in branches.

Weaknesses:

1. Maturity level of QAS is low (quality disconnected with ISMA objectives and goals; quality is not a shared responsibility in culture but rather a formal policy; there is no link between quality and compensation/motivation system and no digital solutions available for maintaining of QAS);
2. Information about quality reports (surveys) is not in high quality and reports are not available to all stakeholders. As a result, many of them don't understand the content and value of them;
3. Stakeholders do not see and understand their role in QAS;
4. Study programme assessment reports are not fully publicly available for students and other stakeholders.

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

#### **Analysis**

Based on the information provided in the ISMA self-assessment report (SAR p.57), ISMA uses only private funds for study provision. Mostly (75%) it is income from tuition fee. Other income includes income from training courses (6%), income from contract research (5%), income from other research activities (11%), and income from rent, utilities and other services (3%).

The financial calculations of the study programmes included in the description of the programmes show that ISMA will be able to implement the study programmes successfully if the planned number of applicants is admitted. During the meeting with ISMA management, the information provided in the self-assessment report was confirmed. The positive financial results of the last years allowed them to allocate additional funds for the implementation and development of study programmes, as well as for the use of study materials and scientific infrastructure. Taking into account the strategic development plans, provisions are made, which consist of 10% of the total revenue (SAS page 61).

Taking into account that ISMA provides education in Main office in Riga (Latvia) and also have two branches: Latgale branch (in Daugavpils, Latvia) and Fergana branch in Uzbekistan; the infrastructure for studies is well equipped in all implementation places. It should be noted that ISMA is the only HEI in Latvia that has branches abroad.

Based on the information provided in the ISMA's SAR (annex 1.3\_Schematic\_Management\_Structure\_ISMA .pdf), the implementation of the study programmes is ensured and supported by the following structural units: Senate, Rectorate, Rector's advisors, Study Department, ISMA Scientific institute, Professorship Council, International Relation Department, Project Department, Quality Management Department, Personnel Department, Career Centre, Training Centre, Library, Utility Department, Marketing Department, IT Department, Finance Department and Student Service. The description of the programmes considers the tasks of each structural unit, which indicate that the study process can be successfully ensured and supervised. ISMA implements 5 different level study programmes in this study field, therefore it can be concluded that the number of structural units and the number of their tasks is sufficient for the implementation of the programmes in the study field.

ISMA is well equipped in the study process. Well with equipment provided study field is one of the motivators for students and academic staff. Study infrastructure is appropriate and available for every Latvian and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block. ISMA SAR (pp. 61-62) indicates that the existing material and technical base allows to fully ensure the necessary conditions for the implementation of the study programmes. Lectures take place in spacious conference halls, auditoriums, computer classrooms, students have access to a modern library with a spacious reading room. The auditoriums are well equipped. In 2021, ISMA has signed a cooperation agreement with ATTA Centre and planned to use the centre for the study process

provision in the future. Material and technical infrastructure inspections carried out during the visit gave a very positive impression of ISMA infrastructure quality.

According to the information provided in the description of the ISMA study field (annex 2.3.1 and SAR p.59.), the elected academic staff of the ISMA and the academic staff of other Latvian higher education institutions or invited guest lecturers - practitioners participate in the implementation of the study programme. The selection or election of the academic staff is carried out in several stages ("ISMA Regulations on the Election to Academic Positions"), which is determined by certain procedures. The process of recruitment of lecturers is transparent and effective. In total, 51 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study process of the whole field, 65% or 33 lecturers from these teaching staff at ISMA work in elected positions - 9 professors, 8 associate professors, 12 assist. professors and 4 lecturers. In turn, 18 guest lecturers are specialists in the field or lecturers of other universities. There are 24 lecturers with a doctor's degree or 47% of the involved lecturers. The information provided in the CV of the lecturers confirms that both the ISMA lecturers and the involved guest lecturers are sufficiently competent to implement the content of the programmes in a quality manner. All lecturers involved in the study process have a doctor's or master's degree. The CVs of the lecturers confirm the information provided in the programme description about their qualifications.

To improve the qualifications and quality of work, the academic staff participates in conferences, publishes articles, monographs, shares experiences or teaches courses within Erasmus + (SAR pp. 61-62). During the visit, both management of ISMA, as well as teaching staff confirmed that lecturers can be granted funding for participation in international scientific conferences and publishing of monographs by request. According to SAR (p.67), teaching staff also had the possibility to improve their knowledge of English. However, the description, terms and criteria of qualification improvement for teaching staff is not provided and described. A clear incentive system ensuring the qualification and quality of work of the academic staff has not been established.

The language of instruction of the study programmes is Latvian and English. The signatures of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme confirm their English language skills. SAR annex 2.3.1. reflects the level of English language proficiency: the highest C2 is 14 (28.5%); C1 is 14 (28.5%) and B2 is 21 (43%) of the involved lecturers. As can be seen, only a part of the involved lecturers reaches the highest level of language skills. During the meeting with ISMA lecturers, the experts had the opportunity to assess the level of English, which was not fully confirmed. According to experts, it would be desirable for some lecturers to be more critical to self-assessment and to improve their English language skills.

ISMA learning process (also distance learning) is well-equipped with resources (for example, all rooms have video lecturing equipment; the library has electronic databases and e-books). Based on the information provided in SAR (p.64), ISMA offers students and lecturers the possibility to use the open-access library with electronic registration of the issuance and receipt for books, and periodicals, an electronic catalogue of student works. The administrative team is always ready to answer questions and support students. The library provides the study and scientific literature in different languages necessary for academic and scientific work in accordance with the study programmes. ISMA does not subscribe to many online electronic databases and is mostly oriented towards using open source resources. Subscription to EBSCOhost platform is available and constantly used. ISMA also provides library and electronic reading rooms in the main building and in both branches, and there is also a quiet reading room and specialized workplaces for group work. Each year, every faculty submits a list with necessary literature. The budget for all library resources is about 17.000 EUR per year. During the visit to the library, it was found that the number of books,



magazines, and other resources is sufficient both in Latvian and English languages. Yet, it can be observed that many books are outdated. ISMA should find the resources to widen the list of subscribed online electronic databases and ensure that it is also available in the library. For broader access to the different information sources in branches, ISMA signed a couple of agreements with the library of Daugavpils university, Information Resource Centre of Ferghana State University and Ahmad Fargoni named Fergana Regional Information and Library Centre. ISMA students have a possibility to use all resources in place, read, copy and scan necessary information, but not to take the books away. However, it is necessary to mention, that all these centres have an access to the Scopus, Web of Science and other scientific databases, as well as to the very broad range of different literature sources, which gives these students an advantage over the students of the head office in Riga. ISMA should find the partners and sign similar agreement/s with the libraries in Riga.

The students and lecturers of ISMA use the information system Moodle and website isma.lv. Many documents can be found on the ISMA website ([www.isma.lv](http://www.isma.lv)) in the section About ISMA/ "Documents", (for example, ISMA Satversme (LV), Regulations on ISMA Senate), in the sections For Applicants, For Students, Science etc. ISMA library offers to use an open access library with electronic registration of literature issuance and receipt.

ISMA for study programmes use the Moodle system, which contains the materials necessary for studies (description of the study course, lecture materials in separate study courses, etc.). It was noted that lecturers use the e-learning platform Moodle in distance learning courses for both designing materials and self-assessment questions. All involved groups - Latvian and foreign students, distance students, graduates, academic staff marked only positive about the Moodle system, which is understandable, practical and useful for everyone especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

ISMA provides support for every student, e.g. through the Student council. Positively, many members of the Student council are foreign students. They are open to help anyone in need. If students have a proposal for any questions, they can reach management through group leaders or programme directors. The Student Information Centre also provides support to students by advising on issues regarding conclusion of contracts, continuation of studies, termination of studies, change of study form. Support for international students is provided by the International Department. Every year ISMA offers a career day for all students, where they can get to know potential employers and actual information about their professions. ISMA students can use Business incubator services as well. ISMA has well-organized students` orientation process (a welcome week for students and Student information centre provide all necessary information, students also can participate in internationalization evenings). Students of the study field make use of the opportunity to go abroad for exchange. Students have the opportunity to avail of Erasmus mobility for studies as well as practice placements (SAR, p.90). ISMA has an impressive list of agreements for mobility. However, during the visit, meetings with graduates and students revealed that it was mostly used by foreign students (some more than once for both study and internship). It also varied based on the programme the students were in. Most of the opportunities were used by students in the Bachelor of Business administration in tourism.

Despite the fact that ISMA premises are not suitable for the students with special needs (stairs for wheelchairs, elevator, special equipment for hearing and seeing impaired does not exist), ISMA management declares that they are ready to provide learning services for the students with special needs and solve problems on a case-by-case basis (for example, to plan lectures only on the 1st floor, to prepare special study materials etc.).

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

In general, it should be noted that the resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the study field are adequate. ISMA uses only private funds for study provision. The financial calculations show that ISMA will be able to successfully implement the study programmes if the planned number of applicants is admitted.

All the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process.

The process of recruitment of lecturers is transparent and effective. ISMA uses appropriate measures for the improvement of the academic staff and lecturers are granted funding for participating in international scientific conferences and publishing of scientific papers, monographs and academic books. However, a clear incentive system to ensure the qualification and quality of work of the academic staff has not been established.

ISMA has established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students.

Strengths:

1. ISMA is well equipped in the study process;
2. ISMA has a well-equipped library available for all students' (also distance learning) and teaching staff's individual work;
3. ISMA has well-organized students' orientation and support processes;
4. ISMA uses only private funds for study provision, it allows them to make decisions, change, and adapt to market changes and requirements very quickly;
5. Taking into account that the high number of students are foreigners, it is positive that many members of the Student Council are foreign students and can understand various specific problems and help solve them.

Weaknesses:

1. ISMA does not provide an infrastructure for students with special needs, for example, for wheelchairs, for hearing and seeing impaired etc.;
2. The description, terms and criteria of qualification improvements for teaching staff are not provided;
3. The students and teaching staff do not have a full access to the articles in scientific databases like Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct etc.

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

### **Analysis**

In 2015, ISMA created a the Business Laboratory of ISMA Research Institute. As SAR states, "The strategic plan of the Business Laboratory of ISMA Research Institute foresees the involvement and coordination of the research activities of young scientists and students in their scientific research work. The developed plan is focused on scientifically based development, emphasizing its connection with business and society" (p.73).

The research activities of the study field correspond to the priorities set by the ISMA that are mostly oriented on practical aspects. Main research directions indicated on SAR p. 79 are: business environment, communicative and linguistic competence, HR management, system modelling and recreation systems development.

ISMA proposed an increase in scientific capacity that is expected to involve mainly doctoral students who are satisfied with the possibility to join the PhD studies. In terms of students' theses, the HEI concentrates on topical business problems such as decision-making, role of venture capital, innovation methods in human resource management, etc. For example, doctoral students are free to choose their topic of interest, often related to their professional activities. The provided topics of the first-level, bachelor and master's level theses (pp. 83-84) seem to be well connected with the business administration topics. However, the provided list of doctoral theses topics (SAR, p.74) seems to concentrate on various aspects of educational system. An outstanding research direction is within tourism sector which then corresponds to the study programme of Business administration in Tourism.

ISMA provides opportunities and motivates staff to improve their professionalism, perform the scientific activity. Exchange of students and lecturers and cooperation with foreign universities in case of doctoral studies is promoted. Especially taken into account, that ISMA do not have the own promotional council and doctoral students have to find the university for the defence of the PhD work.

The particular list of the projects ISMA participated in is not provided. From the information provided it seems that in the list of scientific research projects ongoing, they mostly concentrate on sustainability policies and management and future of education. In terms of connection to a doctoral study programme, it is unclear how well they are connected with a program that teaches human resource management, managerial economics, finance management, innovation management, etc.

HEI indicates that all research work is organized under Business Laboratory of ISMA Research Institute, involving not only the teaching staff but also students of all programmes. This type of organisational body without clear research streams and separation of the staff makes it difficult to clearly identify the impact of the research on the study programmes, its outcomes or involvement in the study process. The reliability of scientific research activities and outcomes is questionable as there are no high level scientific publications available. For example, a provided publication list "SCOPUS indexed publication of ISMA lecturers and students.xlsx" indicates that ISMA teaching staff takes a collaborator role rather than the main authorship of publications (mostly third or later author). The publications mostly refer to conference proceedings rather than journal publications. Figure 3 in SAR document pg. 81 indicates that there are only 3 journal articles in peer-reviewed journals with 0 citations. This is extremely alarming considering the level of scientific work. Moreover, some of the publications with ISMA teaching staff's names are published with different affiliations (document "SCOPUS indexed publication of ISMA lecturers and students", thus, should not be considered as a part of ISMA teaching staff's achievements.

Scientific research is promoted through an incentive system for lecturers. SAR (p. 67) explains that ISMA covers 100% of the costs for staff to participate in particular seminar or conference fee and the list of potential seminars/conferences/training is provided at the beginning of the year by staff to administration. Additionally, part of the doctoral studies' costs at ISMA doctoral programme are covered for those lecturers that want to obtain it. ISMA also promotes Erasmus+ exchange and collaboration with foreign partners and the mobility opportunities are quite extensively used by the staff.

The biggest part of lecturers' CVs do not include a list of publications. Some of the lecturers have a list publication, but the last included publications are quite old dated, for example, in 2015-2016. According to annex 2.4.1. (Publikācijas un projekti.xlsx) very difficult to recognize the number of publications and their importance.

International cooperation partners are selected based on the criteria listed in SAR p. 88-89, specifically based on educational programmes on entrepreneurship and business, composition and structure of the academic staff, competitive position of a HEI, the importance of partner activities, curriculum, teaching methods, quality assurance, international activity, etc. However, it is not clear how these criteria are evaluated and compared. ISMA also organizes two regular internal conferences where international collaboration is expected. In terms of scientific research-based international collaborations, it is unclear how these projects are developed and if there is a working mechanism behind.

Regarding students' involvement in scientific research, students have the opportunity to participate in ISMA's conferences such as International Scientific conference Information Technologies and Management, Open Learning and Distance Education or Internship & Employment. Students are required to write final Theses at the Bachelor and Master levels. At doctoral-level, research is implemented through the whole study process. From the overview of the participants, it seems that mostly doctoral students participate in the above-mentioned conferences. Thus, it is not clear how the results of scientific activity of lower-level students are included in the study process, if students are encouraged to use own or others' research as references or develop their research further. The interviews with current students indicated that students have heard about the possibility to take part in a research or participate in those conferences, however, they are not really interested in it. Thus, there is a need for a better working mechanism to involve earlier-level students in scientific activities.

The study field can not be considered successful on scientific research. It is recommended to develop it by engaging in the implementation of new projects and continuing existing scientific cooperation. In addition, some of lecturers are not active enough with scientific research: some of them may be are not interested in it, but the impression was that the high teaching workload impedes them to devote more time to research, as well as not all of them are familiar with the scientific research at all.

The experts did not find evidence of innovative approaches within the study process on ISMA, or at least they were not presented to them. It is not a common practice to use a Sabbatical year. During the meeting with the academic staff and management no one mentioned a possibility to use Sabbatical vacation for the research or any other activities.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The scientific research of ISMA study field of "Management, Administration and Management of Real Property" is underdeveloped and requires significant improvements in structure and mechanisms as well as quality assurance.

### **Strengths:**

1. There is a research laboratory setup in the organization;
2. There is a strong ongoing interest in educational development in terms of research activities, visible from doctoral thesis topics. Also, continuous interest in tourism and hospitality, connecting with the bachelor-level programme;
3. There is an incentive system for teaching staff to participate in scientific conferences and get involved in research activities and exchange program Erasmus +.

### **Weaknesses:**

1. There are no clearly defined research streams that could bring out the potential of the institution

and there is a lack of research alignment within researchers;

2. The quality of scientific research and publications is questionable as there are no publications available in international peer-reviewed journals, only in conference proceedings;
3. There is no mechanism in place promoting a high-level scientific work for the teaching staff;
4. There is no mechanism/incentive system in place to involve lower-level students into scientific research, most involvement happens with doctoral or master students.

## **5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

ISMA University of Applied Sciences has many cooperation partners: other higher education institutions, associations, secondary education institutions, and employers both in Latvia and abroad. The main criteria for selecting partners are the relation of cooperation partners to the study field and the curriculum of study programmes, the efficiency of cooperation partners' activities, as well as their reputation. Mostly, ISMA builds long-term partnerships through which it can work on a number of issues. They have created 12 steps criteria for finding partners. As for employers, they are always sought after, because the number of students at the ISMA is growing every year, and there are not that many internship placements. To gain new contacts and new cooperation partners, the directors of ISMA study programmes, the representatives of ISMA Career Centre, as well as the management of ISMA participate in the national and international conferences, seminars, as well as take advantage of international mobility opportunities. In addition, in order to attract new employers, ISMA organizes the annual Internship and Employment conference, where the existing ISMA partners take part in, as well as the new ones are invited.

In compliance with ISMA Traineeship Regulations, the students of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years of studies shall do traineeship according to the ISMA study plan. All traineeship objectives are related to the learning outcomes to be achieved within the study programme, based on the knowledge, skills, and competences defined in the professional standard and acquired during the study courses. Students are informed about cooperation partners from Latvia and abroad with whom ISMA cooperates within the traineeship and employment. Students are introduced with section "Traineeship for Students" of ISMA website, where they can find the information they need about the traineeship, and as the section on current vacancies. Additionally, at the end of November each year, ISMA organises the international conference "Internship and Employment", where students get acquainted with potential employers from Latvia and abroad, gain additional knowledge in business administration, personnel management and marketing, development trends and demand on the Latvian and foreign labour market. At the end of the conference, each student has the opportunity to talk to company representatives, ask any questions they might have, and apply for traineeship. Experience has shown that this conference is very useful as many students gain traineeships in Latvia (in companies like SEB Shared Service Centre, Accenture Latvia, Cabot Latvia, Evolution Gaming, Mogotel Hotels, Radisson Blu, etc.) and in foreign companies (for instance, Odeon Tours in Spain, JobTrust in Greece, and Clio in Bulgaria).

Before going to traineeship, traineeship workshops – meetings are organized for all the students, where the process of the traineeship, the necessity of traineeship objectives, and preparation of traineeship documents are explained. Before starting each traineeship, a student is free to find the traineeship place on their own, as long as the traineeship in the company corresponds to the ISMA study programme. ISMA students are introduced to the traineeship assignments, which they have to implement at the specific traineeship place and at the end of the traineeship they have to present their traineeship report, composed according to the specific traineeship tasks.

After meetings with employers, experts found that they are chosen based on personal relationship or they are previous ISMA graduates. It was mentioned that there are growing number of students, so ISMA management should think about more possibilities to find more places for students internship. Experts were informed that students are satisfied with possibilities to choose place for internship in Latvia or used Erasmus+ grants. In SAR, the criteria for choosing students for Erasmus+ is defined, however interviews with students and lecturers revealed that they are not well familiar with those. Recommendation from experts is to share information with students and lecturers more often.

With foreign partners, ISMA has mainly used funding of the Erasmus and Erasmus + programmes. Accordingly, Erasmus + agreements largely reflect the aforementioned cooperation (lecturers' visits, administrative staff visits, working on joint projects, etc.). ISMA is proud of a lot of lecturers using Erasmus platform, but not so many ISMA lecturers participated in a such programme. Experts would recommend to search foreign partners in research areas as well and to participate in other programs.

How it was mentioned before, ISMA has a lot of agreements with different institutions abroad. But mostly the same staff are going abroad (list of outgoing staff), not all staff knew about such possibility (interview with staff). ISMA has incoming lecturers as well, but these lecturers as usually are coming only for Erasmus week, so students have lectures in very limited time. Experts would recommend invite foreign lecturers not only on Erasmus week.

ISMA is trying to find students from abroad and has some system for that. To attract foreign students, ISMA organizes advertising campaign trips, including participation in educational exhibitions, establishes its representative offices (such as in Belarus, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Switzerland), supports and attracts agents who offer their mediation services (India, Azerbaijan, Russia), and uses students as "ISMA messengers" who, through their positive experience in studying at ISMA, attract their relatives, friends and acquaintances. It would be advisable to carry out research regarding the possibilities to attract students from other EU countries and to find ways to grow incoming student numbers. ISMA provides a family discount on tuition fees. But experts did not find any explanation about the processes for finding lecturers from abroad. It is understood that Erasmus+ mobility program is the main source and the number of lecturers from abroad differ each year. It would be useful to find new ways to invite more foreign lecturers to participate in the study process and also to attract lecturers to do research with international and other higher education institutions.

ISMA positive experience - started implementation of study programme in Fergana (Uzbekistan) branch. This branch has possibility to grow, because of the interest from the local society, growing number of students and support from the local government as well.

Joint study programmes have not yet been established at the ISMA. The SAR mentions ISMA evaluated three possible joint programmes: bachelor study programme "Creative Industries Management", bachelor study programme "International Management and Digital Marketing", joint master programme "Business analysis", but do not mention any higher education institutions with whom these joint degree programs would be established. So experts have doubts that these programmes would be in action on mentioned time - 2022 February.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Even though the processes for cooperation and internationalisation are in place, some

improvements would be useful. Cooperation in Latvia is mostly based on finding internship places, but internationalization is based on using Erasmus+ funding. Experts recommend broadening the understanding of cooperation and internationalization at ISMA.

Strengths:

1. ISMA has strong and long-term cooperation with the higher education institutions, companies;
2. ISMA ensures internships for bachelor's and master's program students including Erasmus+ grants;
3. Developed system and procedures for the attraction of the students from abroad;
4. ISMA has an international study environment that allows it to attract new students;
5. Involvement of lecturer's practitioners in the study process;
6. ISMA has established a branch in Fergana. This branch has good possibilities to grow.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of formal processes for collaboration between academic staff from different departments, industry professionals, and other programme stakeholders (the cooperation seems to take place, but the formalization of the process could be beneficial);
2. International mobility within programmes is not equally strong;
3. Low number of ISMA lecturers participate in Erasmus+ mobility programme;
4. Low number of incoming Erasmus + or other programmes teachers' mobility;
6. Low number of international lecturers in all study programmes;
7. Lack of formal procedures for foreign lecturer invitation and involvement in the study process;
8. There is not sufficient cooperation in the area of international science development (research, projects, and publications developed in international teams).

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

### **Analysis**

ISMA received recommendations during a previous study field assessment in 2013 and has provided an overview of their implementation or reasons to omit.

Recommendations contain the necessity to include a study course on research methodology within the curriculum to train students in effective use of databases for their research. ISMA has fulfilled the recommendation, different study courses have been incorporated in each study level. During the on-site visit, ISMA representatives demonstrated Moodle system, including the aforementioned study course materials. In addition, students are shown the most up to date information technologies and applications.

Previous recommendations included also the necessity to improve the quality of the Master's thesis - more research, more challenging topics, more primary literature resources, a clear system for final thesis assessment. In order to facilitate the recommendation, ISMA has developed guidelines on the requirements for the design, content and directions of final papers. The developed recommendations allow students to understand the purpose and meaning of the work, significantly affect the quality of the content and design of the work, as the document is written in easy-to-understand language. Guidelines also provide recommendations for clearer and more unified requirements for bibliography. Such guidelines were created for other study levels as well. In experts' opinion, guidelines are sufficient and clear.

Several previous recommendations included suggestions to merge resources, define the most

effective study programmes, as well as to merge both Bachelor professional study programmes - "Business Administration" and "Business Administration in Tourism". Since the last study field assessment, ISMA has strengthened their infrastructure to better suit the needs of the students in the assessed study direction, premises are equipped with advanced computer technologies, the building in Lomonosova street 1/7, Riga has been renovated. To use resources more efficiently, the content of both Bachelor study programmes has been coordinated and joint lectures are organized for students in those study programmes. ISMA had decided to omit the recommendation to merge the study programmes, justifying it with the demand from the labour market, but in experts' opinion, both study programmes are very similar, after graduation students obtain the same professional qualification "Business Administrator", thus would benefit from merging and reorganising - one study programme with two specializations. In addition, ISMA is planning to widen the study field and open new study programmes.

As per recommendation, library resources have been updated and it has been moved to new and renovated premises.

To ensure graduate and employer involvement, previous recommendations included the development of the committee for graduates and employers, which has been fulfilled by creating a Study direction council that includes both graduates and employers for everyday management and development of study field and respective study programmes.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Almost all recommendations have been implemented, for some justification has been provided for omitting them. Study courses on research methodology have been implemented in all study programmes at all levels, clear guidelines have been developed for the creation of the final thesis. ISMA has omitted the recommendation to merge both Bachelor study programs, but in experts' opinion respective programmes should be merged and reorganised as after graduation the same professional qualification is obtained.

### **Strengths**

1. Clear guidelines created for the creation of final thesis in all study levels;
2. Study courses on research methodology have been implemented in all study levels.

### **Weaknesses**

1. Bachelor study programmes "Business Administration" and "Business Administration in Tourism" have not been merged.

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

- 1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

ISMA has a Quality Policy, defined and approved by the Senate, which aims is to increase the efficiency of ISMA operations, to organise and systematise internal processes and procedures, to help staff and stakeholders to understand their role and increase their motivation to engage in the development of ISMA activities. The description of the quality management is provided in the SAR (pp.17-18), but a full text of ISMA's Quality Policy is available at [https://isma.lv/images/FILES/ISMA\\_Kvalitates\\_politika\\_2020\\_EN.pdf](https://isma.lv/images/FILES/ISMA_Kvalitates_politika_2020_EN.pdf)



This was confirmed by the information gathered during meetings with the highest leadership of the university, students, and directors of study programs which were executed in a 'questions and answers' format.

Internal quality assurance system is compliant with the Latvian legislation in general. However, there are limitations to the system as experts were not able to determine continuous feedback loops that are necessary for continuous improvement. Some processes (discussed in the previous sections) were unclear.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Quality assurance system is partly established and working. The academic personnel and other employees of ISMA are involved in the quality management system. However, the internal quality circle is not closed, as stakeholders are not introduced with the results of self-evaluation reports, there are no discussions with different groups of stakeholders to generate the improvements. Not all quality procedures are totally clear.

- 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:** Partially compliant

Study programmes are regularly updated, but there is lack of information about the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection, so the group of experts could not take positions about this issue.

Review and design of study programmes are regulated by the internal rules. However, they should be more clearly communicated with all the involved parties.

According to the self-assessment report, ISMA ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field. During the meeting with ISMA management, teaching staff, employers and students the information provided in the programme description was confirmed.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The student learning outcome assessment system is described for all levels: first level, bachelor, master and doctoral studies. The requirements for assessing student learning outcomes for each particular course are given in course curricula.

Criteria are clear and publicly available. Students understand them. Study regulations are available online and easily achievable. Most of the information can be seen in Study regulations. According to the self-assessment report ISMA policy was established, but during the meeting with ISMA teaching staff, employers and students it was found that the loop is not closed.

- 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:** Partially compliant

Academic staff and the work quality procedures and mechanisms for assuring them have not been fully developed.

According to the self-assessment report a mechanism for the development and internal approval

of the study programmes, supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed. ISMA provides a document with requirements on Academic positions. However, it does not define the quality of scientific research work or language requirements even though most of the programmes are taught in two languages. During the meeting with ISMA management, teaching staff, employers and students the information provided in the programmes description was confirmed.

- 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:** Partially compliant

The ISMA study regulations have been developed. The information on satisfaction and achievements of students is being collected, but the industry and graduates feedback is not collected in systematic manner.

The description of the ISMA programmes mentions that the students and lecturers of the university use the information system Moodle. Moodle system contains all documents related to the methodological support of the study program. It also aggregates information about the entire study process (decisions on the student, marks earned). Every semester, students are surveyed (paper or electronic questionnaire) on courses taken, satisfaction with the way courses are organized, the content of courses, and the delivery of study courses. The survey results are available to all teaching personnel and administrative staff.

During the meeting with ISMA management, teaching staff and students the information provided in the programmes description was confirmed.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Organisation of quality assurance system is based on ISMA Quality policy. Despite the fact that quality assurance system is not fully developed and do not provide a systemic approach to handling quality assurance and continuous improvement, ISMA tries to ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.

This was confirmed by the information gathered during meetings with the highest leadership of the university, students, and directors of study programmes which were executed in a 'questions and answers' format.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Cooperation agreements with private enterprises, government organizations, NGOs, HEIs, and scientific institutions serve as evidence of cooperation, including cooperation in the provision of internship places, and organisation of traineeships provided in the plans of study programmes. ISMA has established strong cooperation with different institutions from Latvia and abroad. But the list of the partners should be revised based on achievements and the need to cooperate with local and foreign institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

ISMA is not involved in any scientific project at the moment. Teachers participate in scientific and practical research work, projects, conferences, the publication of monographs, however, the publications of academic staff in journals which are indexed in WoS and Scopus is not high (3 publications in the year 2016, 14 publications in the year 2017, 8 publications in the year 2018, 9 publications in the year 2019).

Higher targets should be placed for promoting excellence in research such highly ranked scientific journals (i.e., those with high impact factor) as well as publishing in top field journals in Economics, Management, Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Tourism, Real Estate etc.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Mostly all recommendations were implemented and experts can agree to the justification provided by ISMA on partially implemented recommendations regarding the necessity to join both bachelor programmes. The Experts' conclusions were simply based on the interviews and documentation provided during the visit.

**8. Recommendations for the Study Field****Short-term recommendations**

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Provide the description, terms and criteria of qualification improvement for teaching staff.   |
| 2. SAR results should be discussed with students, not just be available for interested; study programme quality could be improved with relevance monitoring by an extended variety of monitoring methods (e.g. discussion, analysis). |
| 3. Increase lecturer efforts with scientific project proposals.   |
| 4. Include scientific research results in the study process.  |
| 5. Regulate the formalization of collaboration between academic staff from different departments, industry professionals, and other programme stakeholders.   |
| 6. Develop a motivation system for the regular improvement of the course description.   |
| 7. Develop a common form (template) for course descriptions.  |
| 8. Create an advertising campaign to attract students from EU countries.  |
| 9. Create an advertising campaign to attract students and lecturers to participate more in research and scientific projects.  |

**Long-term recommendations**

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Create a process to increase the level of research and publications (in highly-ranked international publications). |
| 2. Provide appropriate infrastructure and technology for students with special needs (auditory and seeing impaired).  |

3. Make the writing of scientific publications and international conference attendance obligatory for the lecturer career advancement.
4. Develop the cooperation with internationally recognized universities, teachers, and industry experts relevant to the study directions programmes.
5. Expand international cooperation with experts and academic, attract them as visiting lecturers and involve in research cooperation.
6. Use a more selective approach in selecting foreign partners from HEI, in order to have some added value beyond the mobility itself (e.g. to develop research projects).
7. Merge both bachelor study programmes and implement specialisations.
8. Encourage more lecturers to participate in Erasmus+ mobility program.
9. Increase the number of incoming student mobility.
10. Organize courses for lecturers introducing new teaching methods to study process (reflection, role games, IT tools for different subjects, lectures in different places, blog writing, etc.)
11. Organize seminars for teaching staff on scientific projects participation, research paper publishing.
12. Obtain and implement more IT tools and programs for the study process. For example, economic forecasting equipment, calculation of indicators program, accounting software, import flow management, economic risk assessment program, virtual enterprise simulation program.
13. Develop the cooperation with industry not only in traineeship programmes, but also in industry research and during the study process (for instance, cooperation in business incubator).
14. In case of difficulties increasing the research level, fully discontinue the doctoral programme.

## II. "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate" ASSESSMENT

### II. "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The first level professional higher education study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate" (41345) provides a professional qualification of a "Property manager". Code of the programme according to the Classification of Latvian Education is 41345.

The aim of the study programme is defined as "to prepare competent, socially responsible property managers, who are open to self-development and who, in the interests of real estate market participants, are able to ensure real estate management, maintenance and development in accordance with real estate management requirements and market development trends."

In general the tasks and learning outcomes of the programme are developed in accordance with the aim, but following aspects should be considered:

- If there is a result "Understands and implements, in the bounds of one's professional duties, a socially responsible approach to real estate management" defined, then there should be more study courses regarding sustainability and responsibility;

- If there is a result "Is able to demonstrate comprehensive and specialized knowledge in the field of real estate management" defined, then there should be more specific study courses regarding to the digital transformation in property management.

The ISMA formulated and expected study results of this programme correspond with 4th level vocational qualification/ 5th level NQF/EQF.

The programme is conducted in Latvian in the form of full-time studies and part time extramural studies. The study programme was not implemented in English and since 2019 no students have been admitted to the Russian language stream that will be discontinued. Based on the statistics, there are only 4 students in 2020 (1 -1st year, 3 -2nd year) in full-time studies. From year 2015, there are no students or graduates in part-time studies.

Admission requirements due to ISMA information are regulated by the Admission Regulations, which are approved annually at the ISMA Senate meeting. Admission regulations have been developed in accordance with Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Cabinet Regulation No. 846 "Regulations on Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programs" and were proofed by experts.

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

ISMA first level professional higher education study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate" has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. The expected study results of this programme correspond with 4th level vocational qualification/ 5th level NQF/EQF. Based on the statistics, there are only 4 students in 2020 (1 -1st year, 3 -2nd year) in full-time studies. From year 2015, there are no students or graduates in part-time studies.

Strengths:

1. ISMA has described all indicators in SAR based on the requirements from legislative framework.

Weaknesses:

1. The tasks include keywords "social responsible" and "specialized knowledge", however, based on the descriptions of study courses, there is a place of improvement regarding to actual topics regarding to sustainability and climate changes and also digital transformation in construction/property management field.

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

### **Analysis**

The first level vocational higher education study programme "Entrepreneurship in the field of Real Estate" envisages the acquisition of the first level vocational higher education diploma and the fourth level professional qualification of property manager. The study programme content complies with regulations Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 141 from March 20, 2001 "Noteikumi par pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu" (Regulations on the State Standard of First Level Vocational Higher Education). In compliance with the Regulations on Study Field Management, approved by ISMA Senate on December 29, 2016, the content of the study courses has been updated and approved by the correspondent Study Field Council.

The study courses are reviewed and updated once a year. The content of the study courses of the

study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate" is relevant and corresponds to the industry tendencies and the demands of the labour market. The updated study plan is approved on 24.02.2020 by ISMA Senate. Prot. No. 1-20. The changes made in the study programme in the period from the previous accreditation are reflected. Study programme is provided only in Latvian language. Descriptions of study subjects correspond with study programme requirements. However, experts noted that in many study subjects the used scientific literature is old and not updated. Experts recommend to update scientific literature for study subject yearly.

The goal of the study programme is "to prepare competent, socially responsible property managers, who are open to self-development and who, in the interests of real estate market participants, are able to ensure real estate management, maintenance and development in accordance with real estate management requirements and market development trends". On experts opinion this study programme can achieve the main goal, because the subjects included in the curriculum make base for it, for example, „Managerial psychology and social responsibility“, „Real estate management, maintenance and valuation“, „IT in real estate management“, „Real estate marketing“, „Business communication and record keeping“ and etc. Experts would like to point, that students should be informed about protection of personal data (this information can be added to subject „Legal regulation of real estate management in the Republic of Latvia and the EU“ or other subject). Additionally it can be subjects related to business ethics. During the meetings with study programme directress, it was said that many practitioners-entrepreneurs teach in the study program. Also students has traineeship as well, when they have a possibility to combine knowledge given in lectures with the practice.

Content of study programme in general comply with the professional standard. The compliance of the qualification with the professional standard from 2009 provided in SAR (III. Description of the Study Programme - 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof, annex 3.1.10\_Compliance\_Prof\_Standart\_RE.docx). However, the new standard was adopted in June 9, 2021 (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-153.pdf>), but study programme based on the old standard from 2009. Respectively, ISMA has to review study programme and to adopt it to the new standard.

Evaluated the general aim, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme before in the study content should be paid more attention to the future development trends accordingly to the study programme level: there should be more study courses regarding sustainability and responsibility and more specific study courses regarding to the digital transformation in property management. Based on the EU level climate goals, there will be a significant changes also in the sustainability of property management in the next 10 years. Additionally, there is only one study regarding to IT field, but it is very general and does not cover very important innovations in IT field - 3D construction, BIM, BIS etc. Unfortunately study courses do not emphasize these topics and could be improved.

Experts stressed that from 2017 year less and less students are choosing this study programme. In 2020, only 4 students are studying in this programme.

Various study methods and forms are used in the process of implementation of ISMA study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate". In general, when evaluating the practical implementation of the programme, it should be noted that, similarly to the previous self-evaluation period, teaching methods and forms, appropriate to the specifics of the study programme, are used - lectures, seminars, discussions, brainstorming, case studies, presentations, independent work. In general, lectures and practical works are used during study process. At the moment of evaluation, a

very low number of students (3) participate in the learning process, thus not all study methods are applicable. Depending on the situation, different methods could be used. Positively, HEI invites lecturers-practitioners that provide students with industry examples and concentrate on the skills needed in the industry.

At the beginning of each course, a lecturer introduces the students with the planned learning outcomes. Students are informed about the conditions that must be met during the study course, how the knowledge is assessed, and how the final assessment is formed. The assessment also takes into account the students' work during the semester (success in tests, active participation in seminars, drafting independent papers, preparation of reports, etc.) by applying the cumulative assessment methods stipulating for gradual formation of final assessment from several types of student's learning.

Qualification traineeship in the amount of 16 CP is the component of the study plan of the first level vocational higher education study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate". Students have good possibilities for traineeships as there are agreements between ISMA and real estate organisations.

Students provided a positive evaluation both about the university and the study programme. The availability of study materials and academic literature has received the lowest evaluation in results of student questionnaires. It was noticed during the expert visit too.

Considering that students are eligible for study exchange from the second year onward, the opportunities for study mobility in the first level professional higher education study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate" are very limited. So far, there has been no student mobility.

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

Vocational study programme corresponds with main requirements related to the level of studies. Requirements by Cabinet of Ministers regulation No 141 are met, because ISMA gives for students theoretical and practical training, which provides an opportunity to perform simple tasks in a specific sphere of practical operation. ISMA developed the aims and objectives of the study programme pursuing the requirements of Professional Standard and in accordance with the existing development trends on the real estate market. ISMA have to review study programme and to adopt it to the new standard from June 9, 2021. The changes made in the study programme in the period from the previous accreditation are reflected. There are a lot of possibilities for students to do traineeship. No student mobility in this study programme.

Strengths:

1. Good possibilities for traineeship;
2. A strong aspect of deepening practical skills in the study programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Continuously decreasing number of students;
2. Sources should be updated in all descriptions of study courses;
3. Low taken into account future development trends.

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

#### **Analysis**

A detailed description of resources included in the analysis section of the study field (3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field) is applicable to the first level professional higher education study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate" and the previously described resource and material base is fully at the disposal of students providing the possibility for qualitative implementation.

Based on the information provided in the self-assessment report (SAR p.57), ISMA uses only private funds for study provision.

The financial calculations of the study programme included in the description of the programme show that ISMA will be able to successfully implement the study programmes if the planned number of applicants is admitted. However, according to the SAR (annex 3.1.1\_Statistic\_Students\_RE.xlsx) last years there are only 4 students in this programme. Therefore, the question about financial stability and cost-effectiveness of the programme arise. Especially taking into account that in the provision of this study programme 23 educators are involved. Still the positive financial results of the last years in ISMA allowed one to allocate additional funds for the implementation and development of the study programme, as well as for the use of study materials and scientific infrastructure.

The premises of the study process provision are located in ISMA building in Lomonosova street 1, building 7. Study infrastructure is appropriate and available for local and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block. The existing material and technical base allows to fully ensure the necessary conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Lectures take place in spacious conference halls, auditoriums, computer classrooms. The auditoriums are well equipped also for online work.

Students and academic staff have access to a modern library with a spacious reading room and access to Internet and many electronic databases and e-books. During the visit to the library, it was found that the library stock for this study programme is not very sufficient: many paper books have the old year of publication; additionally, the availability of study materials and academic literature has received the lowest evaluation in results of student questionnaires.

All involved groups - students, academic staff marked only positive about the Moodle system, which is understandable, practical, and useful for everyone. Moodle system use 100% of academic staff and students.

Students of the study programme have access to Business Incubator facilities and resources, computer rooms with „Microsoft Office“ programmes.

Inspections of material and technical infrastructure carried out during the visit gave a positive impression of ISMA infrastructure quality. Overall, the study foundation, information base (including library), materials and technical base and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions, creating preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes.

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

The resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the first level of higher education study programme are adequate. There is a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support. All the students and the teaching staff have an access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process. ISMA established a well-functioning



support system, based on the needs of the students.

In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, thus, demonstrating the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process.

Strengths:

1. Sufficient material and technical resource base;
2. A well-equipped library available for all students' and teaching staff individual work;
3. Staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general.

Weaknesses:

1. Many paper books have the old year of publication.
2. The availability of study materials and academic literature on the topic of real estate, real estate maintenance etc. is low.
3. Taking into account the low number of students, the question arises about the study programme cost-effectiveness.

#### **4. Teaching Staff**

##### **Analysis**

The Law of Higher Education Institutions describes the requirements for the academic staff. ISMA first level professional study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate" teaching staff meets these requirements.

According to ISMA SAR, the academic staff involved in Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate consists of 7 lecturers (2 elected and 5 not elected), 10 docents (6 elected and 4 not elected), 2 elected assistant professors and 4 elected professors, that is assessed as more than enough in terms of number of involved teaching staff. But there is some lack of specialized knowledge in real estate with the current elected academic staff and some of specialized topics are taught by specialists in other academic fields, for example, a course of Real Estate Management, Maintenance and Valuation (and more). For a first level professional education, more practical knowledge would be necessary. Thus, there is a concern regarding the longevity of the available specialized knowledge. However, academic staff is qualified enough to deliver the basics that are necessary for the programme.

The continuous development of the academic staff concentrates on Erasmus+ teacher mobility programme and related outcomes (teachers' conference). The study programme with involved academic staff has been updated in 2020, based on the recommendations on the working group, professional standards, EU cooperation partners and accreditation experts. The working group coordinated with lecturers, the qualifications of the staff and specialization in industry were taken into account. However, continuous collaboration between teaching staff members happens in a more information setting (no formal description of procedures was obtained) and through above-mentioned Erasmus+ related activities.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research through regular attendance to conferences (especially own ISMA-organized conferences), however, the level of conferences is hard to determine. Additionally, most of the publication names available indicate the lack of research with

topics related to real estate. But is important, that according to the study programme level staff needs to participate in applied research.

The workload of the teaching staff is hard to evaluate as currently there are 23 members of staff involved in a programme with only a few students. The student numbers have been decreasing in years, most of the academic staff is involved in multiple other programmes, thus, there is a concern how well they are able to deliver quality courses and if it is a sustainable use of the intellectual resources. Additionally, the low demand of the programme is not aligned with the excellence value that HEI explains as "<...> the development of modern, internationally recognized high quality study programmes being in demand".

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

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments. The programme attracts specialists from the industry to join the study process. However, according to the CVs provided in SAR, there is lack of specialized knowledge in real estate with the current elected academic staff and some of specialized topics are taught by specialists in other academic fields. The academic staff is funded for improving of the qualification and quality of work. ISMA provides remuneration, the lecturers are granted funding for participation in local and international scientific conferences. However, the formal description of criteria for qualification improvement for teaching staff are not created.

Increased cooperation and knowledge exchange could be useful in delivering the programme and achievement of learning outcomes.

International activities need to be improved to ensure greater international influence for staff and students.

Strengths:

1. A wide variety of specialists involved, allowing a more multidisciplinary approach to real estate management;
2. The collaboration through Erasmus+ activities, work with working group and informal knowledge sharing allows course module improvements and better alignment.

Weaknesses:

1. Large number of personnel involved in a programme with limited number of students;
2. Lack of real estate-specific knowledge in elected academic staff (most of specialized courses are provided by guest lecturers);
3. Lack of applied research activities in the field of real estate management.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme has been added as the annex to the study programme and is in compliance with Cabinet regulation no. 202 (April 16, 2013).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation is provided as Study programme annex, that the agreement between ISMA and The College of Law (Juridiskā koledža) ensuring the continuation of the studies.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation added as the Study programme annex and is in accordance with Cabine Regulations no. 795 (December 11, 2018).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation has been added as Study direction annex and ensures that teaching staff that is involved in implementation of the study programme is proficient in Latvian language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of the study agreement has been added as Study programme annex and is in compliance with Cabinet regulations nr.70 (January 23, 2007).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study programme is implemented only in Latvian and all study course descriptions and materials have been prepared accordingly and in compliance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Compliance of the criteria for acquiring the professional qualification "Property Manager" has been provided as the Study programme annex and proofed by experts

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The study programme is developed in compliance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 141 from March 20, 2001 "Noteikumi par pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu" (Regulations on the State Standard of First Level Vocational Higher Education).

Compliance of the criteria has been provided in SAR, annex

3.1.10\_Compliance\_Prof\_Standart\_RE.docx and proofed by experts. However, the new standard was adopted in June 9, 2021. ISMA has to correct the study programme according to it.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

According to the teaching staff CV's attached as Study direction annex as well as information provided during the study visit, members of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of

the study programme comply with the criteria set out in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. Each academic staff member has either publications or practical work experience. Most of the teaching staff teaching real estate-related topics are involved as guest lecturers from the industry.

#### 15 R5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the criteria set in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education as well as is in accordance with relevant Cabinet Regulations.

### Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the first level of the higher education study programme are adequate and ensure the delivery of the study process. However, the availability of study materials and academic literature on the topic of real estate, real estate maintenance etc. is low. Also financial resources are questionable, taking into account the low number of students, the question arises about the study programme cost-effectiveness.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

### Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

First level professional higher education study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate" corresponds with main requirements for the level of studies.

The changes made in the study programme in the period from the previous accreditation are reflected. But it is necessary to mention, that it is not full compliance with the new professional standard from 2021.

There are a lot of possibilities for students to do traineeships. No student mobility in this study programme, but with low number of student in the study programme it is understandable.

In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, thus, demonstrating the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process. However, quality of

study materials and academic literature on the topic of real estate, real estate maintenance etc. is low. Many paper books have the old year of publication. Last years there were only 4 students in this programme. Therefore, the question about financial stability and cost-effectiveness of the programme arise. Especially taking into account that in the provision of this study programme 23 educators are involved.

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments. For the study programme realization are attracted specialists from the industry to join and improve of practical side of the study process. However, according to the CVs provided in SAR, there is lack of specialized knowledge in real estate with the current elected academic staff and some of specialized topics are taught by specialists in other academic fields.

The academic staff is funded for improving of the qualification and quality of work. ISMA provides remuneration, the lecturers are granted funding for participation in local and international scientific conferences. However, the formal description of criteria for qualification improvement for teaching staff are not created.

Increased cooperation and knowledge exchange could be useful in delivering the programme and achievement of learning outcomes.

International activities need to be improved to ensure greater international influence for staff and students.

Taking into account everything above mentioned ISMA have to decide about programme sustainability.

#### Strengths:

1. ISMA has described all indicators in SAR based on the requirements from legislative framework;
2. Good possibilities for traineeship;
3. A strong aspect of deepening practical skills in the study programme;
4. Specialized topics are taught by guest lecturers from the industry;
5. Sufficient material and technical resource base;
6. A well-equipped library available for all students' and teaching staff individual work;
7. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general;
8. A wide variety of specialists involved, allowing a more multidisciplinary approach to real estate management;

#### Weaknesses:

1. The tasks of study programme include keywords "social responsible" and "specialized knowledge", however, based on the descriptions of study courses there is a place of improvement regarding to actual topics regarding to sustainability and climate changes and also digital transformation in construction/property management field;
2. Different teaching methods in courses could be emphasized even with a small group of students;
3. Sources should be updated in all descriptions of courses;
4. Decreasing number of students;
5. Low quality study materials and academic literature on the topic of real estate, real estate maintenance etc.
6. Many paper books have the old year of publication and limited sources of real estate-related books;
7. Large number of personnel involved in a programme with limited number of students;
8. Specialized real estate courses are provided by guest lecturers which does not ensure knowledge

continuity;

9. Lack of research activities in the field of real estate management.

10. Not full compliance with the new professional standard.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

## **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Update study course descriptions and overall content of the study programme to ensure emphasis on social responsibility, sustainability and digital transformation in construction and real estate management. |
| 2. Update study course description part "Literature and other sources of information".  |
| 3. Update the programme according to the latest professional standard (June 9, 2021) to comply.   |

### **Long-term recommendations**

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Diversify teaching methods to facilitate different needs of students and to achieve study goals.                               |
| 2. Position study programme to ensure steady or increasing number of students.  |
| 3. Continuously update library resources to ensure up to date information flow for students and teaching staff.                   |
| 4. Attract more elected teaching staff with specialized knowledge in real estate, rather than heavily relying on guest lecturers. |
| 5. Support and promote research in the field of Real Estate for teaching staff and students.                                      |

## **II. "Business Administration in Tourism" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Business Administration in Tourism" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

ISMA professional bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" (42345) has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, in accordance with the State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education and the Classification of Professions of the Republic of Latvia. As a result of mastering the study programme, students are awarded a Professional Bachelor Degree in Business Administration in Tourism with qualification "Business Administrator"(Qualification level: Level 5 of professional qualification, corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) level 6). Programme code according to the Classification of Latvian Education is 42345.

The aim of the study programme is to train professional, competent, self-empowerment oriented,

and innovative-minded, globally competitive tourism business executives who are able to establish and manage new, innovative and competitive companies in the global tourism market or to hold leading positions in existing companies both in the Latvian market and abroad.

During the visit, it was concluded that in order to achieve the goal of the study programme, the courses of the study programme are designed in a certain order. The intended results of the programme or learning outcomes are formulated as knowledge, skills and competences.

Studies take place in Latvian and English, not only in Riga, but also in branches – Daugavpils and Fergana (Uzbekistan). Compared to other programmes offered by ISMA, the Professional Bachelor study programme “Business Administration in Tourism” is popular among Latvian high school graduates as well as in foreign markets (2013-2020 about 300 students per year). Due to provided statistics, there are 484 students in study programme in total, 68 of them are students in Fergana branch and 8 students in Daugavpils branch in 2020.

As confirmed during the visit, the implementation of the study programme, content and expected study results are reviewed at the meetings of the study programme council and based on the feedback from industry.

The title of the study programme, the degree to be obtained, the professional qualification, the goals and tasks are clearly defined and interrelated. As the director of the study programme pointed out during the visit, the study programme is based on the current demand for the labour force with higher education in the labour market.

Admission requirements are regulated by the Admission Regulations, which are approved annually at the ISMA Senate meeting. Admission regulations have been developed in accordance with Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Cabinet Regulation No. 846 “Regulations on Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programs” and formulated for local and foreign students, for Latvian citizen and non-citizen of the European Union, a citizen of the European Economic Area or a citizen of the Swiss Confederation and a resident of the European Community holding a valid residence described procedure of entitling to study at ISMA Professional Bachelor study programme “Business Administration in Tourism”.

The right of foreigners who have not been issued a permanent residence permit to study at ISMA is determined by Section 83. of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The procedure of the admission of foreigners to ISMA is provided as attachment in SAR (for instance, for foreigners it is necessary to prove that their knowledge of English enables them to obtain higher education in Latvia (by presenting an internationally recognized certificate such as IELTS, Pearson PLC, ETS, etc.).

Based on the information in SAR and also based on the interviews with representatives, experts concluded, that the study programme is very similar to the study programme “Business Administration” and the following for Bachelor programme “Business Administration in Tourism (42345)” and programme “Business Administration (42345)” was found:

- Both programmes have quite similar goals, tasks and expected results;
- Both programmes have quite similar target audience;
- Both programmes have quite similar study courses and academic staff for courses.

Based on these conclusions, expert’s opinion is that there is not clear value for separate programmes.



## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

ISMA professional bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. Compared to other programs offered by ISMA, the Professional Bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" is popular among Latvian high school graduates as well as on foreign markets (2013-2020 about 300 students per year). There are 68 students in Fergana and 8 students in Daugavpils in 2020.

The goal of the study programme, the intended results of the programme or learning outcomes, the courses of the study programme are designed in a certain order.

Strengths:

1. The title of the study programme, the degree to be obtained, the professional qualification, the goals and tasks are interrelated;
2. The study programme is based on the current demand for the labour force with higher education in the labour market in Latvia, Europe, Uzbekistan, CIS.

Weaknesses:

1. The study programme goals, tasks, expected results, study courses and academic staff are very similar to the study programme "Business Administration".

## 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

### Analysis

The content of the study courses of the Professional Bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" is designed to ensure the preparation of a leader who is capable of ensuring a company's operations in all functional areas and taking legal and ethical responsibility for its development. The study programme has been developed and updated on the basis of legal enactments (Cabinet Regulations No. 512 "Regulations Regarding Second-level Vocational Higher Education State Standard" from 26 August 2014; Professional Standard "Business Administrator" approved on 18 September 2019).

Since 2012 the study programme Tourism Management was accredited in the study field "Management and Administration, Real Estate Management" and containing 3 specializations (Tourism Management, Hospitality Management and Restaurant Business), the study programme has been subject to the following changes: specialization "Tourism Management" was consolidated into programme "Business Administration in Tourism" as its main part; specialization "Entrepreneurship in the Restaurant Business" was expanded and improved by creating a first level study programme licensed and accredited within the framework of Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Leisure Organization; a new specialisation was developed – Digital Technologies in Tourism. For actual accreditation the study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" is offered for students in version with 3 specializations: Restaurant and Club Business Management, Tourism and Hospitality Management and Digital Technologies in Tourism. However, Restaurant and Club Business Management and Tourism and Hospitality Management specialisations have only one course difference, thus, experts question the need to separate those specialisations.

Regarding this, despite the fact that all this specializations are well developed, interesting and in current trends, experts do not consider that these three specializations are needed only in tourism management, because in some branches (Latgale, for example) the number of students is very low and it could create conflicts between students if some students would like choose different

specializations. ISMA also has another programme connecting hospitality and tourism, so duplication of study subjects in different study fields has to be prevented. Experts recommend combine this study programme with bachelor study programme in business administration, creating one bachelor study programme in business administration with two specializations: business administration and tourism management, because there is the same study field and this decision will help to save resources and to redirect resources for quality assurance of studies of all study programmes. But, experts indicate to pay attention to keep up the study programme progress, specific and results in Fergana (Uzbekistan), because the branch is open in 2020 and first evaluation results need to be analysed in a timeline.

The goal of the study programme is "to train professional, competent, self-empowerment oriented, and innovative-minded, globally competitive tourism business executives who are able to establish and manage new, innovative and competitive companies in the global tourism market or to hold leading positions in existing companies both in the Latvian market and abroad". Experts agree that this study programme can achieve the main goal, because the subjects included in the curriculum make base for it, for example, Startup Business Management, Tourism Management, Hospitality Industry, Business Communication, Innovation Management, Digital Marketing and etc. For better possibility to achieve above mentioned goal it would be useful to include the subjects connected with psychology or consumer behaviour. These subjects would help better understand personality, develop additional skills in communication and motives of people behaviour. Also students has traineeship in Latvia and abroad that gives them better understanding about global tourism business.

Descriptions of study subjects correspond with study programme requirements. However, experts noted that scientific literature used and listed in course descriptions is outdated and old. Experts recommend to update the list of scientific sources on regular basis, for example, yearly.

Different and diverse study methods and forms are used - lectures, seminars, practical situation analysis, discussions, presentations, individual work in groups and so on. In addition to the contact hours, the students carry out independent work according to the study course plan. But students mentioned that mostly lectures are given for them and tasks in lectures or at home, no additional study methods are used.

As it follows from the above, the management of the study programme both at the place of basic studies in Riga and at the branches, including ISMA Dāvgavpils and Fergana branches, is performed from Riga, and there are no significant differences in the respective processes. How is was already mentioned and after meetings with administration from Fergana branch and students - all lecturers are the same from main campus in Riga. Lecturers are coming to Fergana physically and giving lectures, but on pandemic time the students were used Moodle platform and having lectures remotely.

The framework of the Professional Bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" includes traineeship in the amount of 24 CP divided into three periods in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years of studies. Both ISMA administrative and teaching staff (directors of study programmes, leading lecturers, representatives of Career Centre and International Relations Department, etc.), as well as domestic 118 and foreign employers are invited to collaborate in developing and updating traineeship assignments to ensure training of professionals ready to enter the labour market.

Every year at the end of November the international conference "Traineeship and Employment" is organized in the university, where students get acquainted with potential employers from Latvia and

abroad.

Overall, student evaluations of the Professional Bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" are good. But, the availability of study materials and academic literature has received the lowest rating. This was found during the site visit by expert too.

In the period from 2013 to 2019, outgoing mobility opportunities have been used by 153 ISMA Professional Bachelor study programme students in Business Administration in Tourism, but biggest number of students are going on internship. The incoming student mobility is slightly lower - 84 students enrolled in ISMA Professional Bachelor study programme Business Administration in Tourism.

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

Bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" corresponds with main requirements for such kind of studies. There is necessity for some improvement of programme: to create one bachelor study programme with two specialisations: business administration and tourism management. The situation and specific in branches need to be followed up in progress.

Strengths:

1. Program has growing number of students;
2. There are international and Latvian students;
3. Students can participate in scientific conferences organized by ISMA.

Weaknesses:

1. Study methods are not diverse although claimed different. Experts recommend to emphasize different teaching methods that allow obtaining the goal of the course. For administration, it is recommendation to organize seminars how to use different study methods;
2. Source information should be updated in all study course descriptions.

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

#### **Analysis**

A general description of resources is included in the analysis section of the study field (3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field). All premises are available for students of the Professional Bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" in Riga, all necessary for studies is provided also in branches in Daugavpils and Fergana (Uzbekistan) on a satisfactory level.

Based on the information provided in the self-assessment report (SAR p.57), ISMA uses only private funds for study provision.

The financial calculations of the study programme included in the description of the programme show that ISMA will be able to successfully implement the study programmes if the planned number of applicants is admitted. According to the SAR (annex 3.1.1\_Statistic\_Students\_RE.xlsx) the number of students in Fergana is big enough since opening (48 in 2018, 84 in 2019 and 68 in 2020). However, it should be noted that last years there are only 5-6 students in this programme. Therefore, the question about financial stability and cost-effectiveness of the programme implementation in Daugavpils Branch arise. Especially taking into account that in the provision of this study programme 30 educators are involved. The positive financial results of the last years allowed one to allocate additional funds for the implementation and development of the study

programme, as well as for the use of study materials and scientific infrastructure.

The premises of the study process provision are located in ISMA building in Lomonosova street 1, building 7, as well as in 2 branches: Latgale (Daugavpils) and Fergana (Uzbekistan). Latgale branch is located in Daugavpils, Kandavas street 17. Fergana branch is located in 48, Al-Fergane street, Fergana, Uzbekistan. Study infrastructure in head building in Riga and both branches is appropriate and available for every native and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block. The existing material and technical base allows to fully ensure the necessary conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Lectures take place in spacious conference halls, auditoriums, computer classrooms. The auditoriums are equipped with high-quality visual equipment.

Students and academic staff have access to library with a spacious reading room and access to Internet and many electronic databases and e-books. In branches ISMA signed a couple of agreements with the library of Daugavpils university, Information Resource Centre of Ferghana State University and Ahmad Fargoni named Fergana Regional Information and Library Centre. ISMA students have a possibility to use all resources in place, read, copy and scan necessary information, but not to take the books away. However, it is necessary to mention, that all these centres have an access to the Scopus, Web of Science and other scientific databases, as well as to the very broad range of different literature sources, which gives these students an advantage over the students of the head office in Riga. During the visit to the library, it was found that the library stock for this study programme is sufficient, however, many paper books have the old year of publication.

The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general. It is confirmed, that 100% of academic staff and students using Moodle system for study process. As mentioned, the both groups - students (local and foreign) and academic staff are experienced users of Moodle and only positive about using the Moodle system in study process, the system is understandable, practical and useful even in situation of forced distance learning.

Students of the study programme have access to Business Incubator facilities and resources, computer rooms with „Microsoft Office” programmes.

Inspections of material and technical infrastructure carried out during the visit gave a positive impression of ISMA infrastructure quality. Overall, the study foundation, information base (including library), materials and technical base and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions, creating preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes.

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

The resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the professional bachelor study programme "Business administration in tourism" are adequate. There is a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support. All the students and the teaching staff have an access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process. ISMA established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students.

In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, thus,

demonstrating the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process.

**Strengths:**

1. Study resources and provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of the Bachelor study programme, create the prerequisites for the achievement of learning and research outcomes, can ensure a high-quality study process;
2. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general;
3. Modern library, especially the reading room with many books and e-resources, which is available for students' individual work.

**Weaknesses:**

1. Many paper books have the old year of publication;
2. No access to the scientific databases, i.e. Scopus and Web of Science, for students in the headquarters in Riga.
3. Taking into account the low number of students, the study programme implementation in Daugavpils is probably not cost-effective.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

The Law of Higher Education Institutions describes the requirements for the academic staff. According to ISMA report, the academic staff involved in Business Administration in Tourism programme consists of 30 members of the staff (22 elected and 8 not elected), including elected 3 lecturers, 12 docents, 4 assistant professors and 3 professors, and 8 guest lecturers.

All teaching staff providing members are qualified and experienced in the field. The tourism-specific study courses provided knowledge from industry are taught not only from guest lecturers but also from elected academic staff. Elected academic staff has practical experience in the field, for example as prof. Jevgenija Dehtjare (study courses "Marketing", "Event Management", "Tourism Company Activity Practice", "Tourism Management" e.c.) holds the Ph.D. degree in Economics and has wide international practical experience in travel organization and tourism industry. Specialisation courses (e.g. Sustainable Tourism Development, Organisation of Catering Enterprises Operations) are taught by an experienced staff as well. The goals of the programme (listed on ISMA website) such as "to give students comprehensive knowledge, practical skills and understanding of the laws of modern economic development, of the role of innovation in entrepreneurial activity, the processes which take place in tourism industry and in other industries of the economy related to tourism, of state and public management, and other processes of business activity" can be achieved with the existing staff as teachers have the knowledge of the industry as well as business activities.

The qualification of the teaching staff follows regulatory requirements. The workload of teaching staff (in the relation students per lecturer) is reasonable.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research through regular attendance to conferences (own ISMA-organized conferences and international conferences), however, the level of conferences is hard to determine. The academic staff provides multiple publications, however, mostly in conference proceedings, on tourism-specific topics. The staff is also involved in research, connecting tourism and teaching methodologies.

The collaboration between teaching staff for study course/module alignment is ensured through programme discussions in Council meetings, Department meetings and informal meetings with academic staff. It is, however, unclear, how guest lecturers are involved in this process. Additionally, further development of methodologies and academic staff competences are developed through local ISMA conferences such as Erasmus+ staff teaching and training week.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments. The programme attracts specialists from the industry to join the study process. The academic staff provides multiple publications on tourism-specific topics, unfortunately, mostly in conference proceedings. The staff is also involved in research, connecting tourism and teaching methodologies. Increased cooperation and knowledge exchange could be useful in delivering the programme and achievement of learning outcomes.

Strengths:

1. Strong affiliations and knowledge in tourism industry;
2. Academic staff is involved in scientific research, mostly related to conference publications.

Weaknesses:

1. The collaboration between the staff is based on informal structures. It could be improved towards a more regular and structured collaboration activities.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Business Administration in Tourism"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme has been added as the annex to the study programme and is in compliance with Cabinet regulation no. 202 (April 16, 2013).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation is provided as Study programme annex, that the agreement between ISMA and Baltic International Academy (Baltijas Starptautiskā akadēmija) ensuring the continuation of the studies.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation added as the Study programme annex and is in accordance with Cabine Regulations no. 795 (December 11, 2018).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme is taught in both Latvian and English languages, but the official language in Latvia is Latvian. Confirmation has been added as Study direction annex and ensures that teaching staff that is involved in implementation of the study programme is proficient in Latvian language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme is implemented in both Latvian and English languages. A confirmation has been added as the Study direction annex and ensures that the teaching staff that is involved in the implementation of the study programme is proficient in the English language and all of the teaching staff has at least a B2 level of English language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Professional bachelor study programme

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Professional study programme

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of the study agreement has been added as Study programme annex and is in compliance with Cabinet regulations nr.70 (January 23, 2007).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme is implemented in Latvian and English and all study course descriptions and materials have been prepared accordingly and in compliance with the Law on Institutions of

Higher Education.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Compliance of the criteria for acquiring the professional qualification "Business administrator" has been provided as the Study programme annex.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

This is professional study programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Compliance of the criteria has been provided as the Study programme annex.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

As this is a professional Bachelor programme, the practical work experience is more relevant and the teaching staff delivering the courses have either work experience or scientific publications. Scientific publications are published in conference proceedings mostly, thus the review process and the quality of these proceedings is hard to determine.

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the criteria set in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education as well as is in accordance with relevant Cabinet Regulations.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.



**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study infrastructure is appropriate and available for every native and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block. ISMA is financially self-sustainable, thus admitting the planned number of students to the study program it shall be able to carry out all the responsibilities.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant**Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

ISMA professional bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. Compared to other programmes offered by ISMA, the Professional Bachelor study programme "Business Administration in Tourism" is popular among Latvian high school graduates as well as on foreign markets (2013-2020 about 300 students per year). There are 68 students in Fergana and 8 students in Daugavpils in 2020. Bachelor study programme corresponds with main requirements for related level of studies. Experts assess the necessity for some improvement of programme: to combine the two existing professional Bachelor study programmes and create one bachelor study programme with two specialisations: business administration and tourism management.

**Strengths:**

1. The title of the study programme, the degree to be obtained, the professional qualification, the goals and tasks are interrelated;
2. Programme has growing number of students;
3. There are international and Latvian students;
4. Students can participate in scientific conferences organized by ISMA;
5. Study resources and provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of the Bachelor study programme, create the prerequisites for the achievement of learning and research outcomes, can ensure a high-quality study process;
6. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general;
7. Modern library, especially the reading room with many books and e-resources, which is available for students' individual work;
8. Strong affiliations and knowledge in tourism industry;
9. Academic staff is involved in scientific research, mostly related to conference publications.

**Weaknesses:**

1. It is recommended to emphasize different teaching methods that allow obtaining the goal of the course. A training on different study methods would be recommended for the teaching staff;

2. Source information should be updated in all study course descriptions;
3. Many paper books have the old year of publication;
4. No access to the scientific databases, i.e. Scopus and Web of Science, for students in the headquarters in Riga.
5. Taking into consideration the low number of students, the study programme implementation in Daugavpils is not cost-effective.
6. The collaboration between the staff could be improved towards a more regular and structured collaboration activities.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Business Administration in Tourism"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business Administration in Tourism"**

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

- |  |
|--|
| 1. Update study course description part "Literature and other sources of information". |
|--|

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

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Diversify teaching methods, fostering also group work both during online and offline classes.  |
| 2. Continuously update library resources to ensure up to date information flow for students and teaching staff.   |
| 3. Ensure access for students and teaching staff to Scopus, Web of Science and Science direct databases.  |
| 4. Introduce a clear procedure for teaching staff collaboration, especially in the implementation of the study programme and ensure interlinked study course cooperation. |
| 5. Offer and ensure didactics training for elected and guest teaching staff.  |
| 6. Engage in activities to promote the programme and increase the number of students in Daugavpils branch.  |

## **II. "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

ISMA professional bachelor study programme "Business Administration" (42345) has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, in accordance with the State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education and the Classification of Professions of the Republic of Latvia. As a result of mastering the study programme, students are awarded a professional bachelor's degree in qualification "Business Administrator" (Qualification level: Level 5 of professional qualification, corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) level 6). Programme code according to the Classification of Latvian Education is

The aim of the study programme is to prepare highly skilled, innovative-minded and competitive business leaders who are able to solve today's business problems in the fast-growing global competitive market, have entrepreneurial thinking and ability to build and successfully manage businesses in various industries, while being aware of their social responsibility. The aim includes a part "while being aware of their social responsibility" which is very important based on the EU level targets and values in social responsibility.

During the visit, it was concluded that in order to achieve the goal of the study programme, the courses of the study programme are designed in a certain order. The intended results of the programme or learning outcomes are formulated as knowledge, skills and competences. However, based on the fact that there are also branch in Fergana, experts are not confident about following study courses and their logic in study programme: "Legal Regulation of Enterprise Activity", "Accounting and taxes". Based on the descriptions in SAR and also literature and sources provided for students, there are themes about Latvian legislative framework and requirements. Courses should be adjusted to the requirements and practice from international market.

Studies take place in Latvian and English, not only in Riga, but also in branches – Daugavpils and Fergana. Compared to other programs offered by ISMA, the Professional Bachelor study programme "Business Administration" is popular study programme among India, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. There are more than 800 students in 2020, including 56 students in Fergana and 17 students in Daugavpils.

The title of the study programme, the degree to be obtained, the professional qualification, the goals and tasks are interrelated.

Admission requirements are regulated by the Admission Regulations, which are approved annually at the ISMA Senate meeting. Admission regulations have been developed in accordance with Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Cabinet Regulation No. 846 "Regulations on Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programs". Every Latvian citizen and non-citizen of the European Union, a citizen of the European Economic Area or a citizen of the Swiss Confederation and a resident of the European Community holding a valid residence permit is entitled to study. The right of foreigners who have not been issued a permanent residence permit to study at ISMA is determined by Section 83. of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The procedure of the admission of foreigners to ISMA is provided as attachment in SER (for instance, for foreigners it is necessary to prove that their knowledge of English enables them to obtain higher education in Latvia (by presenting an internationally recognized certificate such as IELTS, Pearson PLC, ETS, etc.)

By comparison of the both professional bachelors study programmes, implemented in ISMA, based on the information in SAR, in Annexes and also based on the interviews with representatives, experts concluded following for Bachelor programme "Business Administration in Tourism (42345)" and programme "Business Administration (42345):

- The goals, tasks and expected results of both programmes are quite similar;
- Both programmes have quite similar target audience;
- Both study programmes have quite similar study courses and academic staff for courses.

Based on these conclusions, expert's opinion is that there is not clear value to continue to implement the two separate programmes.

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

ISMA professional bachelor study programme “Business Administration” has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, in accordance with the State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education and the Classification of Professions of the Republic of Latvia. The study programme is popular among India, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. There are more than 800 students in 2020, including 56 students in Fergana and 17 students in Daugavpils.

Strengths:

1. ISMA has described all indicators in SAR based on the requirements from legislative framework.

Weaknesses:

1. The study programme goals, tasks, expected results, study courses and academic staff are very similar to the study programme “Business Administration in Tourism”.

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

### **Analysis**

The study programme has been developed and updated on the basis of legal enactments (education standard and Occupational Standard), instructions of accreditation experts from the previous accreditation of the study direction, results of student and graduate surveys, topical scientific research, including research conducted by ISMA teaching staff, recommendations expressed in surveys, descriptions of internship placements, meetings at conferences, workshops, consultations on the development of Bachelor Papers. According to ISMA internal procedure, the topicality of the study programme is supervised by the respective Study Direction Council, if necessary, making corrections to the study plan, the content of the study courses, assignments, etc. Descriptions of the study courses are updated and reviewed in the respective departments at least once a year, usually before the beginning of the academic year or more frequently if necessary. The study plan is approved at least once a year by ISMA Senate.

The web page of ISMA shows that there are 6 specializations in this study programme: Business Administration, Creative Industries Management, Music Management, Information Systems Management, Business Communication, Business Law and Security. However, the experts did not see those specializations reflected in the study programme in SAR. Additionally, experts are not able to say how these specializations are communicated to students or how students choose their specialization. Moreover, experts are not able to comment if the teaching staff is qualified to implement all the specializations in equal quality.

This programme was improved by recommendations from previous experts. In 2017, the fragmentation of the programme was eliminated and the number of examinations within the semester was optimized by combining several study courses, for example, separate courses Macroeconomics (2CP) and Microeconomics (3CP) were merged into the study course Economics (4CP); Philosophy (2CP) and Business Ethics (2CP) - Philosophy and Ethics (4CP); Computer Science, Informatics and Programming Basics (2CP) and Information Technology in Management (2CP) - Applied Informatics (4CP). In 2018 significant study courses were introduced in accordance with the requirements of the labour market and current situation in the field - Labour Law, Public Relations Management and Electronic Commerce. In its turn, in 2019 the current curriculum content was created by refining the names of study courses, supplementing or correcting their content, eliminating overlapping content, for example, Mathematics for Economists on Quantitative Methods and Statistics, Environmental Safety Management on Environment, Labour and Civil Protection, and new courses such as Digital Marketing, Social Entrepreneurship and Event Management were

introduced.

Based on the fact that there are also branch in Fergana, experts are not confident about following study courses and their logic in study programme: "Legal Regulation of Enterprise Activity", "Accounting and taxes". Based on the descriptions in SAR and also literature and sources provided for students, there are themes about Latvian legislative framework and requirements. Courses should be adjusted to the requirements and practice from international market.

Different and diverse study methods and forms are used - lectures, seminars, practical situation analysis, discussions, presentations, individual work in groups and so on. In addition to the contact hours, the students carry out independent work according to the study course plan. However, during the interviews with students, students mentioned that a traditional way of teaching has been used in most of the lectures - teachers giving their presentations and tasks that should be done either in lecturers or at home. No other study methods were mentioned. Additionally, to experts knowledge, no innovative study methods (like, for example, reflections, role games, IT tools for different subjects, blog writing, etc) are used in the programme.

The study process of ISMA Professional Bachelor study programme "Business Administration" does not differ by the place of implementation - in Riga, ISMA Latgale Branch or ISMA Fergana Branch. Only some small differences in Fergana branch: English language and full-time studies only. The studies in Fergana branch are given by the same lecturers that usually arrive there for a period of 2-3 weeks. During the rest of the time, students are learning individually. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the lectures were organized via Zoom platform and students could attend those either from home or from ISMA Fergana university spaces.

Students have given a positive evaluation of both the HEI and the study programme. Less points were given to „ability to apply the acquired qualification in the professional field“. But how was mentioned by ISMA, they did a lot of improvement in relation to this point. Additionally, students gave lower evaluation to a category "incorporation of the methodological materials and recommendations for students", thus more resources in library settings are advisable.

Students know about possibility to go for Erasmus+ mobility. In the period from 2013 to 2019, outgoing mobility opportunities have been used by 164 students of ISMA Professional Bachelor study programme Business Administration (biggest part of students went to internship). The incoming student mobility is slightly lower - 127 students enrolled in ISMA Professional Bachelor study programme Business Administration in the reporting period.

Experts recommend to reorganize study programme with two specializations: business administration and tourism management. These recommendations are based on: 1) after changing the Latvian law both programs are now in the same direction; 2) there are a lot of the same study subjects, that can be easily to reconstructed study programmes with two specializations. List of the same study subjects in both programs: Legal Regulation of Enterprise Activity, Philosophy, World Culture and Ethics", Business English, Latvian language for foreigners, Quantitative methods and statistics, Applied informatics, Introduction to entrepreneurship, Economics, Environment, Labour and Civil Protection, Labour Law, Marketing, Total Quality Management, Logistics, Electronic Commerce, Business Communication, Financial Management and etc.

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

Bachelor study programme corresponds with main requirements for related level of study programme. There are some improvements after previous expert recommendations. Main recommendation from experts is to create one bachelor study programme with two specializations: business administration and tourism management.

Strengths:

1. Programme has growing number of students (Fergana branch);
2. There are international and Latvian students;
3. Students can participate in scientific conferences organized by ISMA.

Weaknesses:

1. A more diverse set of teaching methods could be used. A training on teaching methods would be recommended for teaching staff.
2. Sources should be updated in all study course descriptions.
3. Bachelor in business administration programme has 6 specializations, however, specialization selection process, differences, communication, etc. were not reflected in the documentation and during the expert visit.

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

#### **Analysis**

A more detailed description of resources is included in the analysis section of the study direction (3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field).

Based on the information provided in the self-assessment report (SAR p.57), ISMA uses only private funds for study provision.

The financial calculations of the study programme included in the description of the programme show that ISMA will be able to successfully implement the study programmes if the planned number of applicants is admitted. According to the SAR (annex 3.1.1\_Statistic\_Students\_RE.xlsx) the number of students in Riga and both branches in Daugavpils and Fergana is big. This indicates the possibility to raise sufficient financial resources for the implementation of this program and to support other ISMA activities. The positive financial results of the last years allowed one to allocate additional funds for the implementation and development of the study programme, as well as for the use of study materials and scientific infrastructure.

The premises of the study process provision are located in ISMA building in Lomonosova street 1, building 7, as well as in 2 branches: Latgale and Fergana. Latgale branch is located in Daugavpils, Kandavas street 17. Fergana branch is located in 48, Al-Fergane street, Fergana, Uzbekistan. Study infrastructure in head building in Riga and both branches is appropriate and available for every native and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block. The existing material and technical base allows to fully ensure the necessary conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Lectures take place in spacious conference halls, auditoriums, computer classrooms. The auditoriums are equipped with high-quality visual equipment.

Students and academic staff have access to library with a spacious reading room and access to Internet and many electronic databases and e-books. In branches ISMA signed a couple of agreements with the library of Daugavpils university, Information Resource Centre of Ferghana State University and Ahmad Fargoni named Fergana Regional Information and Library Centre. ISMA students have a possibility to use all resources in place, read, copy and scan necessary information,

but not to take the books away. Also,, it is necessary to mention, that all these centres have an access to the Scopus, Web of Science and other scientific databases, as well as to the very broad range of different literature sources, which gives these students an advantage over the students of the head office in Riga. During the visit to the library, it was found that the library stock for this study programme is sufficient, however, many paper books have the old year of publication. Regarding the access to digital databases, the experts were able to see that only limited access is provided (citations and abstracts) in Riga branch, thus, it remains unclear if all articles can be accessed.

The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general.

All involved groups - native and foreign students, academic staff marked only positive about the Moodle system, which is understandable, practical, and useful for everyone. Moodle system is used by 100% of academic staff and students.

Students of the study programme have access to Business Incubator facilities and resources, computer rooms with „Microsoft Office” programmes.

Inspections of material and technical infrastructure carried out during the visit gave a positive impression of ISMA infrastructure quality. Overall, the study foundation, information base (including library), materials and technical base and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions, creating preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes.

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

The resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the professional bachelor study programme "Business administration" are good. There is a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support. The number of students is big. Therefore, financial resources for the implementation of this program are sufficient. All the students and the teaching staff have an access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process. ISMA established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students.

In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, thus, demonstrating the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process.

#### **Strengths:**

1. Study resources and provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of the Bachelor study programme, create the prerequisites for the achievement of learning and research outcomes, can ensure a high-quality study process;
2. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general;
3. Modern library, especially the reading room with many books and e-resources, which is available for students` individual work.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Many paper books have the old year of publication;

2. No access to the scientific databases, i.e. Scopus and Web of Science, for students in headquarters in Riga.

#### **4. Teaching Staff**

##### **Analysis**

The Law of Higher Education Institutions describes the requirements for the academic staff. According to ISMA report, the academic staff involved in Business Administration professional bachelor programme consists of 26 staff members (21 elected and 5 guest lecturers), including elected 4 lecturers, 8 docents, 5 assistant professors and 4 professors. 25 of the staff members are teaching the same or similar courses in both Professional Bachelor of Business Administration in Tourism and Professional Bachelor of Business Administration, thus, providing a similar (if not the same) content to students in those programmes (for example, courses such as Applied Informatics, Business English, Accounting and Taxes, etc.).

The qualification of the teaching staff seems to follow regulatory requirements. However, experts note that the programme is taught in both Latvian and English and some of the academic staff has an indicated B2 level of English. Although it fits the regulatory requirements, it was also noticeable during the experts' visit, that English language knowledge might not be sufficient for ensuring the high quality of the courses.

The workload of teaching staff (students per lecturer) is 33 students per lecturer, also keeping in mind that the same teaching staff teaches in all branches (Riga, Latgale and Fergana) and in normal times this requires physical traveling to these branches. Taking into consideration that the same staff teaches also in other programmes (some of them teaching in all five programmes that are assessed during this assessment, for example, Dr. Spiča, Prof. Riashchenko, Dr. Linde, Dr. Dehtjare), the workload is considerably high.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research through regular attendance to conferences (own ISMA-organized conferences and international conferences), however, the level of conferences is hard to determine, leading to conference proceedings as publications. There are multiple people in the academic staff that have published scientific journal articles as well. However, a lot of them are published in Russian language, thus, requires re-evaluation as programmes are being taught in Latvian and English.

The evaluation of teaching staff from students indicates that methodological materials and objective assessment are the lowest qualities while study methods, orderliness and usage of time are the most appreciated in terms of teaching staff work. Poorer quality of methodological materials might also indicate the high workload of the teaching staff or language limitations, additionally not meeting the Excellence value described in SAR. Moreover, figure nr. 3.2.9. indicates that graduates evaluate the quality of theoretical knowledge as lowest indicator. That means that there is a need to continuously develop theoretical knowledge of the teaching staff, improve teaching methods and collaborate within the organisation for calibrating own approaches. As stated in the previous study programme evaluation forms, the collaboration between teaching staff for study course/module alignment is ensured through programme discussions in Council meetings, Department meetings and informal meetings with academic staff. Additionally, further development of methodologies and academic staff competences are developed through local ISMA conferences such as Erasmus+ staff teaching and training week. However, it seems that this approach is not enough and thus would require more regular and structured procedures for quality assurance.



## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments. The academic staff is funded for improving of the qualification and quality of work. ISMA provides remuneration, the lecturers are granted funding for participation in local and international scientific conferences. But the formal description of criteria for qualification improvement for teaching staff are not created.

The academic staff provides multiple publications on study programme topics. Increased cooperation and knowledge exchange could be useful in delivering the programme and achievement of learning outcomes. More regular and structured procedures for quality assurance are required.

Strengths:

1. A popular programme among students in all branches;
2. Reasonable involvement in scientific research both nationally and internationally.

Weaknesses:

1. Significant workload for academic staff (33 students per lecturer), including teaching in three branches;
2. International scientific research collaboration would benefit from more English language usage as the programme is taught only in Latvian and English;
3. English language knowledge is quite low as the programme is taught in both Latvian and English;
4. Collaboration for course/module alignment, methodological approaches would require more structured procedures.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Business Administration"

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme has been added as the annex to the study programme and is in compliance with Cabinet regulation no. 202 (April 16, 2013).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation is provided as Study programme annex, ensuring the continuation of the studies in BA School of Business and finance (Banku augstskola), Baltic International Academy (Baltijas Starptautiskā akadēmija), Ventspils University College (Ventspils Augstskola).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation added as the Study programme annex and is in accordance with Cabine Regulations no. 795 (December 11, 2018).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation has been added as Study direction annex and ensures that teaching staff that is involved in implementation of the study programme is proficient in Latvian language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

A confirmation has been added as the Study direction annex and ensures that the teaching staff that is involved in the implementation of the study programme is proficient in the English language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Professional bachelor study programme

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

Professional study programme

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of the study agreement has been added as Study programme annex and is in compliance with Cabinet regulations nr.70 (January 23, 2007).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme is implemented in Latvian and English and all study course descriptions and materials have been prepared accordingly and in compliance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Compliance of the criteria for acquiring the professional qualification "Business administrator" has been provided as the Study programme annex.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Compliance of the criteria has been provided as the Study programme annex. Compliance proofed by experts.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

According to the teaching staff CV's attached as Study direction annex as well as information provided during the study visit, members of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme comply with the criteria set out in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the criteria set in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education as well as is in accordance with relevant Cabinet Regulations.

## **Requirements (R6-R8)**

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study infrastructure is appropriate and available for local and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block, in the both - main study programme implementing place in Riga and branches in Daugavpils and Fergana (Uzbekistan). ISMA is financially self-sustainable, thus admitting the planned number of students to the study programme it shall be able to carry out all the responsibilities.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant**Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

ISMA professional bachelor study programme "Business Administration" has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, in accordance with the State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education and the Classification of Professions of the Republic of Latvia.

The study programme is popular among students from India, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. There are more than 800 students in 2020, including 56 students in Fergana and 17 students in Daugavpils.

The resources and provision provided are adequate for the successful implementation of the professional bachelor study programme "Business administration". There is a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support. All the students and the teaching staff have an access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process.

ISMA established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students.

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments. Bachelor study programme corresponds with main requirements for such kind of studies.

The improvements after previous expert recommendations were done. But still experts recommend: to create one bachelor study programme with two specializations: business administration and tourism management, current offered specializations could be included as electives or additional minors.

**Strengths:**

1. ISMA has described all indicators in SAR based on the requirements from legislative framework;
2. Programme is popular among students in all branches, a number of students is growing in Fergana branch;
3. There are international and Latvian students;
4. Students can participate in scientific conferences organized by ISMA;
5. Study resources and provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of the Bachelor study programme, create the prerequisites for the achievement of learning and research

outcomes, can ensure a high-quality study process;

6. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general;

7. Modern library, especially the reading room with many books and e-resources, which is available for students' individual work;

8. Reasonable involvement in scientific research both nationally and internationally.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Based on the fact that there are also branch in Fergana, experts are not confident about following study courses and their logic in study programme: "Legal Regulation of Enterprise Activity", "Accounting and taxes". Based on the descriptions in SAR and also literature and sources provided for students, there are themes about Latvian legislative framework and requirements. Courses should be adjusted to the requirements and practice from international market;

2. More diverse teaching methods that allow obtaining the goal of the course should be implemented. Training on different teaching methodologies would be useful;

3. Source information should be updated in all descriptions of courses;

4. Many paper books have the old year of publication;

5. No access to the scientific databases, i.e. Scopus and Web of Science, for students in the headquarter in Riga;

6. Significant workload for academic staff (33 students per lecturer), including teaching in three branches;

7. English language of teachers is weak considering the programme is taught in both Latvian and English languages;

8. International scientific research collaboration would benefit from more English language usage as the programme is taught only in Latvian and English;

9. Collaboration for course/module alignment, methodological approaches would require more structured procedures;

10. The six specializations mentioned in the ISMA website are not reflected in the documentation or during the expert visits.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Business Administration"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business Administration"**

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

1. Update study course description part "Literature and other sources of information".

2. Adjust study content for study course "Legal Regulation of Enterprise Activity", "Accounting and taxes" taught in Fergana to correspond to the regional necessities.

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

1. Diversify teaching methods, fostering also group work both during online and offline classes.

2. Offer and ensure didactics training for elected and guest teaching staff.

3. Continuously update library resources to ensure up to date information flow for students and teaching staff.
4. Ensure full access for students and teaching staff to Scopus, Web of Science and Science direct databases.
5. Evaluate the workload of the teaching staff to ensure adequate workload.
6. Introduce a clear procedure for teaching staff collaboration, especially in the implementation of the study programme and ensure interlinked study course cooperation.
7. Support and promote research activities, especially in English, for teaching staff and students to foster international cooperation.
8. Clearly identify different specializations and communicate those to all stakeholders.
9. Connect the programme together with Business Administration in Tourism which would also help to reduce the workload for teachers.

## II. "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT

### II. "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

ISMA Professional Master's study programme "Business Administration" (47345) has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, in accordance with the State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education and the Classification of Professions of the Republic of Latvia. As a result of mastering the study programme, students are awarded a professional master's degree in qualification "Business Administrator". The planned study outcomes are consistent with the relevant Professional Standard as well as required skills and competences relevant to level 7 of the Latvian Qualification Framework. Programme code according to the Classification of Latvian Education is 47345.

The aim of the study programme is to prepare highly skilled, innovative-minded and competitive business leaders who are able to solve today's business problems in the fast-growing global competitive market, have entrepreneurial thinking and ability to build and successfully manage businesses in various industries, while being aware of their social responsibility.

The intended results of the programme or learning outcomes are formulated as knowledge, skills and competences. During the visit, it was concluded that in order to achieve the goal of the study programme, the courses of the study programme are not fully integrated with tasks written in SAR. For example, task No 4 "To contribute to the updating of the problematic issues of the sector and the development of solutions by supporting the scientific research creativity of the academic staff and students." Is only partly implemented in practice, because there is a place for improvement in scientific research and creativity.

The programme is conducted in Latvian and English in the form of full-time studies, part time studies and part time extramural studies. Depending on the prospective student's previous education, the programme offers a 44 CP version for the duration of 1 year and 1 month for those with 2nd level higher professional education in the field of economics and business (or equalized education) and an

80 CP version for the duration of 2 years for those with a previous academic bachelor's degree in economics and business; a professional bachelor's degree and / or a level 5 professional qualification in a specialty not related to the field of economics and business and a document certifying the level of knowledge of English.

Studies take place in Latvian and English in Riga. There are 370 students in this study programme in 2020 and the largest percentage are foreign students from India.

Different admission requirements have been formulated to ensure the admission of students to the appropriate version of the study programme – 80 CP or 44 CP – which clearly define the previous education students must have to be admitted to either version of the study programme. Only the individuals with at least a tertiary level 2 degree in economics or business can be admitted to the study programme of 44 CP since this means that they have acquired basic knowledge in relevant areas of the sector. Conversely, in the case of a Bachelor's degree in a non-economics or non-business sector, a student is enrolled in a 80 CP study programme (with duration of 2-years in full-time studies) and masters the study courses that provide basic knowledge in the theory and practice of the industry relevant to the Master's degree and professional qualification to be awarded.

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

ISMA master study programme "Business Administration" has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. The programme is conducted in Latvian and English in the form of full-time studies, part time studies and part time extramural studies. There are 370 students in this study programme in 2020 and the largest percentage of students are from India.

Strengths:

1. ISMA has described all indicators in SAR based on the requirements from legislative framework.

Weaknesses:

1. The courses of the study programme are not fully integrated with tasks written in SAR. For example, task No 4 "To contribute to the updating of the problematic issues of the sector and the development of solutions by supporting the scientific research creativity of the academic staff and students." Is only partly implemented in practice, because there is a place for improvement in scientific research and creativity.

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

### **Analysis**

The content of the study courses of the Professional Master's study programme "Business Administration" is designed to provide the training of such an executive who is able to ensure the operation of an enterprise in all functional areas and to take responsibility for corporate developments from the ethical and legal point of view as well. Therefore, the study programme includes both courses that improve knowledge, skills, and competences in business planning and organization of business processes (for example, Strategic Management Concepts, Innovation Activity, Business Processes Modelling), in business environment analysis (Topical Issues of International Entrepreneurship, Business Economics, etc.) and in legal framework (International Business Law) and the development of general attitudes and competencies such as Research Methods and particular chapters in the study courses in Management and Leadership, Human Resource Management and Development, Environment, Labour and Civil Protection etc. In addition,

the academic staff involved in the lecturing of the study courses are also professionals with considerable experience in their field of expertise, founders, and owners of companies. According to ISMA internal regulations, a Council of respective study direction supervises the topicality of the study program by making corrections to the study plan, the content of the study courses, traineeship assignments, etc. when necessary. The descriptions of the study courses are updated and reviewed in the respective departments at least once a year, usually before the beginning of academic year or more frequently if necessary. ISMA Senate approves the study plan at least once a year.

Experts agree that this master programme generally suits the requirements for such kind of programme. There are subjects: Strategic Management Concepts; Management and Leadership; Innovation Activity, Topical Issues of International; Entrepreneurship International Marketing Management; International Business Law; Business Processes Modelling; Human Resource Management and Development, etc. Experts found that there is a lack of elective subjects in this programme, so it is recommended to create some additional subjects that students would have alternatives in their study process. Additionally, the research paper (final thesis) is not mentioned in the study programme description. The study subjects of the study programme are good, however, the main problem in realization of this programme is subjects' content and scientific literature used for preparation of study subjects. In all study subject descriptions experts noticed that often textbooks and/or manuals are used as the main scientific literature. There is a lack of scientific papers and monographs used as literature sources. Analyzing the submitted description of study subjects, it was noticed that only essential information is often provided to master students, it does not go deeper into the study subjects, what is required in master studies. As mentioned earlier in this report, the scientific literature is old and comprised of textbooks and manuals mostly, not including the scientific papers. For master's studies, it can prove to be a big problem due to the fact that master students need to base their research not only on theories but also on latest scientific achievements.

It is mentioned in admission requirements for professional master's programme 44 CP that it is a second level higher professional education in the field of economics and business (or equalized education). Full time studies last for 1 year and part time studies have longer duration. Admission requirements for professional master's programme 80 CP indicate that an academic bachelor's degree in economics and business; a professional bachelor's degree and / or a level 5 professional qualification in a specialty not related to the field of economics and business are required. Full time studies last for 2 years, longer duration for part time studies. So students are prepared for professional master's degree studies. In both study programmes ISMA provides traineeship, master thesis is required and subjects needed for professional master degree are taught. Experts agree that all competencies and learning outcomes can be achieved in two different forms of offered studies.

SAR indicates that Master's study programme "Business Administration" is taught by using different and diverse study methods and forms, e.g., lectures, workshops, case studies, discussions, presentations, individual work, and teamwork and so on. In addition to the contact hours, the students fulfill independent assignments according to the study course plan. But the description of study subjects indicates that lectures, seminars, discussion, workshops, independent work are the only methods used (one of lecturers use case study). There are no any innovative methods. Students confirmed this information during the interviews too.

Students pass a large part of the examinations of the study courses in writing. It is also possible to take the tests orally or to draft a practical paper at the discretion of the lecturer. The assessment also takes into account the students' work during the study course (success in tests, active



participation in workshops, drafting independent papers, preparation of reports, etc.) by applying the cumulative assessment method stipulating for gradual formation of final assessment from several types of student's learning. The basic principles of assessment are taken into consideration throughout the study process, that is, the principle of openness of assessment, the principle of mandatory assessment, the principle of review possibilities of assessment, and the principle of diversity of assessment methods used in the assessment. Passing the state examination is the final stage of mastering the study programme, including elaboration and defense of the Master's thesis. A student can defend his/ her Master's thesis only when all the contents of the study programme have been mastered, when a positive assessment has been obtained for each study course and every objective during the traineeship.

Following the recommendations of the Study Accrediting Commission of April 27, 2016, "Mandatory questions to be Included in the Survey conducted among the students, graduates, and employers", in 2016 ISMA developed unified questionnaires for students, employers, and graduates of all study programmes that allow assessing not only a given study programme, but the work of the University as a whole. The survey takes place every year; therefore, it is possible to find out quickly where and what changes in the study process should be introduced, as well as to follow the dynamics of students' opinions. From report we can see that in general all master degree students are satisfied with study process. More attention should be taken to possibility to access to innovative solutions.

Master degree students know about possibility to use Erasmus+ mobility grants, however, they consider it more attractive to go abroad for a traineeship, but not for studies, also more suitable for bachelor level students. Furthermore, there is a very low numbers of incoming students for this programme.

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

Master study programme "Business Administration" corresponds with main requirements for such kind of studies. The programme is attractive to many due to offered flexibility for students with different undergraduate levels. The duration of studies is shorter for those who have completed a professional bachelor's degree, and longer for those who have completed programmes in related fields of science. There is a necessity for some improvement of programme: elective subjects for students to choose from, also include Latvian language in teaching process.

#### **Strengths:**

1. General Master study programme subject are usual for such kind of studies;
2. There are international and Latvian students;
3. Students can participate in scientific conferences organized by ISMA;
4. Programme is attractive for students with different backgrounds.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. It is recommended to emphasize different teaching methods that allow obtaining the goal of the course. For administration, it is recommended to organize seminars how to use different study methods;
2. In all descriptions of study courses, there is a need to update information on sources. It is also recommended to use publications of the university's academic personnel and to include them in course descriptions;
3. Low number of elective subjects;
4. No Latvian language subjects included in master degree programme with 44 credits;
5. Low number of incoming students' mobility;

6. Low number of mobility for studies of master's degree students.

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

#### **Analysis**

A more detailed description of resources is included in the analysis section of the study field (3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field).

Based on the information provided in the self-assessment report (SAR p.57), ISMA uses only private funds for study provision.

The financial calculations of the study programme included in the description of the programme show that ISMA will be able to successfully implement the study programmes if the planned number of applicants is admitted. According to the SAR (annex 3.1.1\_Statistic\_Students\_RE.xlsx) the number of students is big enough. This indicates the possibility to raise sufficient financial resources for the implementation of this program and to support other ISMA activities. The positive financial results of the last years allowed one to allocate additional funds for the implementation and development of the study programme, as well as for the use of study materials and scientific infrastructure.

The premises of the study process provision are located in ISMA building in Lomonosova street 1, building 7. Study infrastructure is appropriate and available for every native and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block. The existing material and technical base allows to fully ensure the necessary conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Lectures take place in spacious conference halls, auditoriums, computer classrooms. The auditoriums are equipped with high-quality visual equipment.

Students and academic staff have access to library with a spacious reading room and access to Internet and many electronic databases and e-books. However, it is necessary to mention, that ISMA does not provide the access to articles in the Scopus, Web of Science and Science Direct scientific databases (only to names of articles), which could be very useful for students and academic staff. During the visit to the library, it was found that the library stock for this study programme is sufficient, however, many paper books have the old year of publication.

6 educators are involved in the study programme. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general.

All involved groups - native and foreign students, academic staff marked only positive about the Moodle system, which is understandable, practical, and useful for everyone. Moodle system is used by 100% of academic staff and students.

Students of the study programme have access to Business Incubator facilities and resources, computer rooms with „Microsoft Office” programmes.

Inspections of material and technical infrastructure carried out during the visit gave a positive impression of ISMA infrastructure quality. Overall, the study foundation, information base (including library), materials and technical base and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions, creating preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes.

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

The resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the professional Master

study programme "Business Administration" are good. There is a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support. The number of students is big. Therefore, financial resources for the implementation of this program are sufficient. All the students and the teaching staff have an access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process. ISMA established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students.

In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, thus, demonstrating the ability to ensure the delivery of a high-quality study process.

#### Strengths:

1. Study resources and provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of the Master study programme, create the prerequisites for the achievement of learning and research outcomes, and can ensure a high-quality study process;
2. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general;
3. Modern library, especially the reading room with many books and e-resources, which is available for students' individual work.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Many paper books have the old year of publication;
2. No access to the scientific journals in databases, i.e. Scopus and Web of Science.

## 4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

The Law of Higher Education Institutions describes the requirements for the academic staff. According to ISMA report, the academic staff involved in Business Administration professional Master's programme consists of 18 staff members (only one non-elected member of the staff), a third of those elected being professors. The involved teaching staff holds high academic titles (professors, associate professors or professor assistants (docents)), thus the qualification of the teaching staff follows regulatory requirements. The workload of teaching staff (students per lecturer) is reasonable (20 students per lecturer). Teaching staff has education and experience in social sciences, economics, engineering and computer science. In terms of the professional knowledge, 8 of the staff members have industry experience. Thus, the academic staff has the relevant background and knowledge to teach a Professional Master's programme in Business Administration. Experts point out that most of the academic staff has obtained their academic (mostly concerning master and doctoral) degrees from ISMA which might lead to the loss of variety of knowledge or expertise fields, which might also affect the quality of the programme.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research through regular attendance to conferences (own ISMA-organized conferences and international conferences), however, the level of conferences is hard to determine, leading to conference proceedings as publications. There are multiple people in the academic staff that have published scientific journal articles as well. However, a lot of them are published in Russian language, thus, requires re-evaluation as programmes are being taught in Latvian and English since 2019.

The students' assessment of quality of education and teaching staff seems to be quite high, for example, average lecturer's rating is 3.68 (out of 4) within students and 3.38 (out of 4) within

graduates. However, graduates see the lack of practical competencies acquired during the studies. Thus, teaching staff could further promote internships and connect practical work with theoretical knowledge better. The provided documents state that teaching staff continues curriculum and personal development through active participation in conferences and scientific research, however, e.g. Table 3.4.5. indicates that the research/project work has been done between 2012 and 2019, with average of 2-3 publications a year with a maximum number of publications being in 2016. It seems that the activeness of participation varies within the staff. Moreover, the graduate survey indicated that there is a need for latest scientific knowledge and understanding of modern labour market and trends. From the review of the CVs of the teaching staff (2.3.5. CV\_EN.pdf) it seems that even though there are 8 staff members with industry experience, however, often the experience has been obtained a long time ago or lacks relevancy to the programme curriculum. Thus, stronger connections with the industry are needed in order to provide the latest trends and developments in the markets. Additionally, academic staff is recommended to participate in the scientific research activities more actively to gain the latest international insights from there.

Also, as stated in the previous study programme evaluation forms, the collaboration between teaching staff for study course/module alignment is ensured through programme discussions in Council meetings, Department meetings and informal meetings with academic staff. Additionally, further development of methodologies and academic staff competences are developed through local ISMA conferences such as Erasmus+ staff teaching and training week. However, it seems that this approach is not enough and thus would require more regular and structured procedures for quality assurance.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments. The academic staff is funded for improving of the qualification and quality of work. ISMA provides remuneration, the lecturers are granted funding for participation in local and international scientific conferences. But the formal description of criterias for qualification improvement for teaching staff are not created.

The amount and level of publications varies among the academic staff. Increased cooperation and knowledge exchange could be useful in delivering the programme and achievement of learning outcomes. More regular and structured procedures for quality assurance are required.

Strengths:

1. Good enough quality of teaching staff;
2. Sufficient involvement in scientific research.

Weaknesses:

1. More practical skills development needed through either industry-based teaching staff or better curriculum correlations;
2. Most of the publications of the teaching staff are published in Russian language which is not one of the teaching languages of this programme;
3. Lower student satisfaction with latest scientific knowledge and understanding of market trends, requiring teaching staff of a more active collaboration with industry and attendance to conferences.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Business Administration"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme has been added as the annex to the study programme and is in compliance with Cabinet regulation no. 202 (April 16, 2013).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation about agreements is provided as Study programme annex, ensuring the continuation of the studies in the BA School of Business and Finance (Banku Augstskola), Baltic International Academy (BSA - Baltijas Starptautiskā Akadēmija), Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (Ventspils Augstskola).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation added as the Study programme annex and is in accordance with Cabine Regulations no. 795 (December 11, 2018).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Confirmation has been added as Study direction annex and ensures that teaching staff that is involved in implementation of the study programme is proficient in Latvian language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme is implemented in both Latvian and English languages. A confirmation has been added as the Study direction annex and ensures that the teaching staff that is involved in the implementation of the study programme is proficient in the English language and all of the teaching staff has at least a B2 level of English language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of the study agreement has been added as Study programme annex and is in compliance with Cabinet regulations nr.70 (January 23, 2007).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme is implemented in Latvian and English and all study course descriptions and materials have been prepared accordingly and in compliance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Compliance of the criteria for acquiring the professional qualification "Head of the Organization" has been provided as the Study programme annex and complies with the valid professional standard.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The programme complies with the state standards for second level professional higher education as defined in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 512 dated 26 August 2014 "Regulations on State Standards for the Second Level Professional Higher Education". Accessible at SAR III. Description of the Study Programme.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the criteria set in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education as well as is in accordance with relevant Cabinet Regulations.

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The overall rating is mostly fully compliant, except for the scientific production of the academic staff members.

### **Requirements (R6-R8)**

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study infrastructure is appropriate and available for local and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block. ISMA is financially self-sustainable, thus admitting the planned number of students to the study programme it shall be able to carry out all the responsibilities.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments. However, the scientific production of the academic staff members and English language knowledge is questionable.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Courses content is planned and implemented according to the standards. The Master's thesis itself contains an empirical study of the actual situation in the economy, realizing the management science settings for the development of the organization and the corresponding rights that ensure it. However, there is no clear connection between scientific research and educational programme.

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

ISMA master study programme "Business Administration" has been developed in accordance with

the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. The programme is conducted in Latvian and English in the form of full-time studies, part time studies and part time extramural studies. The programme is offered either in 80 CP or 44 CP. Both types of programmes follow the same requirements, including a necessary traineeship, master thesis and specialised courses, thus both can achieve intended learning outcomes and qualification.

The resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the professional master study level are adequate. There is a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support. All the students and the teaching staff have an access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process.

ISMA established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students (exception with special needs).

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory enactments. ISMA provides remuneration, the lecturers are granted funding for participation in local and international scientific conferences. But the formal description of criteria's for qualification improvement for teaching staff are not created.

The academic staff should pay attention to enlarging participation in scientific research and publications in recognized journals. Increased cooperation and knowledge exchange could be useful in delivering the programme and achievement of learning outcomes.

More regular and structured procedures for quality assurance are required.

#### Strengths:

1. ISMA has described all indicators in SAR based on the requirements from legislative framework;
2. Good enough quality of teaching staff;
3. Master study programme study subject in general is usual for such kind of studies;
4. There are international and Latvian students;
5. Students can participate in scientific conferences organized by ISMA;
6. There is a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support.

#### Weaknesses:

1. The courses of the study programme are not fully integrated with tasks written in SAR. In practice, there is a place for improvement in terms of scientific research and creativity;
2. Teaching methods implemented in practice can be considered as traditional and there is a lack of variety of different methods;
3. In all descriptions of study courses, there is a need to update information on sources. It is also recommended to use publications of the university's academic personnel and to include them in course descriptions;
4. Lack of elective subjects in the study programme;
5. Low number of incoming students' mobility;
6. Low number of mobility for studies of master's degree students;
7. Many paper books that have old years of publications;
8. Lack of access to full scientific articles in databases such as Scopus or Web of Science;
9. More practical skills development needed through either industry-based teaching staff or better curriculum correlations;
10. Most of the publications of the academic staff are in Russian language which is not one of the teaching languages.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Business Administration"**



Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business Administration"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Provide the description, terms and qualification criteria of improvement for teaching staff.                                     |
| 2. Improve study programme with more elective subjects.   |
| 3. Include the scientific results of the academic staff in the study process.   |
| 4. Develop a motivation system for the regular improvement of the course description.   |
| 5. Put more effort in attracting students from EU countries.  |
| 6. Create procedures and put more effort in attracting students and lecturers to participate in research, scientific projects more. |
| 7. Ensure access for students and teaching staff to publications in Scopus, Web of Science and Science direct databases.            |
| 8. Improve English language knowledge of the academic staff.  |

### **Long-term recommendations**

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Create an incentive system for academic staff to do research and publish papers in valuable journals.  |
| 2. Increase the number of lecturers with a PhD in study programme;  |
| 3. Expand international cooperation with experts and academics and attract them as visiting lecturers and involve in research cooperation.                                |
| 4. Encourage lecturers to participate in Erasmus+ mobility programmes more.   |
| 5. Increase the number of incoming student mobility.  |
| 6. Develop the cooperation with internationally recognized universities, teachers, and industry experts relevant to the study programme.                                  |
| 7. Organize seminars for teaching staff on new teaching methods.  |
| 8. Organize seminars for teaching staff on scientific project grant writing and participation, publishing papers in indexed journals.                                     |
| 9. Introduce a clear procedure for teaching staff collaboration, especially in the implementation of the study programme and ensure interlinked study course cooperation. |
| 10. Develop a research-based teaching model   |

## **II. "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT**

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

## Analysis

ISMA doctoral study programme “Business Administration” (51345) has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. As a result of mastering the study programme, students are awarded Doctoral degree Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Economics and Business.

Based on the information in SAR, Enrolment in the Doctoral study programme is available for the persons who have Master’s Degree in Business Administration, Public Management, or Education Management, or professional Master’s Degree in Business Administration, or Master’s Degree in other fields of science if their working experience in the field of entrepreneurship management is not shorter than two years. The programme is conducted in Latvian and English in the form of full-time studies, duration – 4 years, 160 CP. Programme code according to the Classification of Latvian Education is 51345.

The aim of the study programme is to prepare versatile researchers in the field of economics and business who meet the requirements of modern research creativity, develop innovative ideas and facilitate the transfer of research results to the national economy, thus promoting economic growth, social development and well-being of society. During the site visit, experts asked questions in order to understand the aim, tasks and learning outcome not only in SAR, but in practice – based on the information received in interviews, experts concluded weaknesses in research activities and there were no signs for “modern research creativity” that is one part of goal defined for study programme. Also during the interviews experts did not receive a confirmation and examples how programme “promoting economic growth, social development and well-being of society”. Study programme director did not provide any examples.

Also the goals, tasks and results are not specific and are not very good interrelated. For instance, there is the task “To promote the participation of young scientists in the research of topical problems of the field, ensuring active cooperation with other Latvian and foreign educational institutions, scientific institutions and representatives of the field”, but no results related to this task defined. The only obtained information is that doctoral students are encouraged to participate in scientific conferences, however, their contributions are unclear.

Based on the statistics, there are 48 students in 2020 but only a few examples of doctoral student activities were included in the SAR. Also, graduate survey analysis pointed out that the programme is not perceived as of high quality.

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

ISMA doctoral study programme “Business Administration” has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. The programme is conducted in Latvian and English in the form of full-time studies. Based on the statistics, there are 48 students in 2020.

Strengths:

1. Big number of doctoral students.

Weaknesses:

1. The goal of study programme is not implemented in practice. Based on the information received in interviews, experts concluded weaknesses in research activities and there were no signs for “modern research creativity” that is one part of goal defined for study programme.

2. Graduate survey points out that students are not prepared well and, based on that fact, the analyses in SAR section "1.2. Analysis and assessment of the statistical data on the students of the respective study programme, the dynamics of the number of the students, and the factors affecting the changes to the number of the students. The analysis shall be broken down in the different study forms, types, and languages" is not professional.

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

### **Analysis**

SAR document indicates that, in compliance with ISMA mission and strategic development plan for 2018-2023 (approved by ISMA Senate, decision No.3-18, June 27, 2018), the mission of the doctoral study programme is to provide modern academic and professional education and research in order to prepare business managers and the economy specialists who are able to manage and create science-intensive, high value added production companies, to restructure traditionally operating companies, as well as to promote the functioning of a dynamic, knowledge-based, competitive economy. The doctoral programme provides students with further acquisition of theoretical knowledge and research skills, preparing them for independent scientific research activities in the chosen field or sub-branch of science. In accordance with the internal procedures of ISMA, the topicality of the study programme is monitored by the Council of the respective study field (ISMA "Regulations on ISMA Study Directions Council", approved at the Senate meeting on December 29, 2016). The study plan, study course content, research assignments, etc. are updated. Descriptions of the study courses are updated and reviewed by the relevant departments at least once a year, usually before the beginning of the academic year or more often if necessary. In report it is written that the study plan is approved at least once a year by the ISMA Senate. The updated study plan of the doctoral study program was approved at the ISMA Senate meeting on August 16, 2019.

The study programme is structured in parts A, B and C. Part A (compulsory part) of the study programme includes theoretical courses in the amount of 14 CP, research work in the amount of 118 CP and a doctoral examination in the amount of 8 CP. Part B (limited elective part) is 8 CP - a student has the opportunity to choose business environment or resource management, Part C (free elective part) is 4 CP.

Evaluating the study programme and content of subjects, it is a doubtful if in reality this doctoral study programme can achieve the high standards described in the SAR report. Firstly, the structure of study programme is questionable. There are only two elective subjects that could be considered as a limitation to the study programme. Only two free elective subjects can be chosen by students and in 3.5.3 plan it is seen that not mentioned how the study course "Risk Management or Management of EU funded programs and projects" can be evaluated. Other ways of getting credits are questionable too, for example, lecturing at another HEI - 32 acad. hours or Supervising of 2 Bachelor or 1 Master thesis, or Traineeship at another HEIs or scientific institutions (min. 2 weeks) can be evaluated in a test form. When asked about this during the interviews with experts, neither doctoral students, nor doctoral programme director could answer. In the descriptions of all study courses, experts noticed that mostly textbooks, manuals are used as the main scientific literature, excluding scientific papers or monographs. Additionally, teaching staff does not present a research point of view to the subjects. For example, a subject "Current Problems of Management" uses only textbooks dated to 2012, 2016. This literature can be used for bachelor level, it is not suitable for master level programme, thus at a doctoral level it should not be included at all. Similarly, this is observed with all subjects. Additionally, the programme provides courses on strategic management, risk management, financial management, innovation management, business resource and business environment management but lacks topics such as supply chain, change, life-cycle, project,

accounting management, marketing and similar that are common in business administration studies.

The SAR states that various and diverse study methods and forms are used in the process of the implementation of the doctoral study programme “Business Administration”: lectures, seminars, case studies, discussions, presentations, independent and group work, etc. But if we looked at description of study subjects we can see that lectures, seminars, discussion, workshops, independent works are only these methods are used (one of lecturers used a case study). There are no innovative methods. However, the most important part of a doctoral study is being able to be involved in the research, however, doctoral students are only partially involved in the research and scientific publishing. This means that doctoral students are not well prepared for an independent scientific work.

The report also states that a large part of the examinations is taken by students in writing. At the discretion of the lecturer, it is also possible to take the tests orally or by developing a practical work. An assessment takes into account the students' progress during mastering the study course (success in tests, activity in seminars, development of independent works, preparation of reports, etc.), applying the cumulative assessment method, which provides for gradual final assessment of several types of student performance.

The specific feature of the ISMA doctoral study programme is that the higher education institution does not have its own promotion council, and the defense of doctoral theses takes place in another institution of a student's choice. ISMA has concluded separate cooperation agreements on the development and implementation of doctoral level programmes, collaboration and student transfer. Experts note that it is very strange that only 9 doctoral students defended doctoral degrees during analysed period, while there are many more doctoral students at ISMA (in 2020 year 48, in 2016 year 29). During the interviews it was also mentioned that the defense of a doctoral thesis in ISMA's recommended partner universities is much more easier (according to the interview with the director of doctoral studies and a student).

SAR report indicates that, in general, all doctoral students are satisfied with study process and not so many places what it is needed to improve for ISMA. A little bit less points are given to the availability to get handbooks, or methodological materials and cooperation with other higher education institutions. Experts found that very huge problem of ISMA that neither doctoral students, nor lecturers have the access to use newest scientific literature, because library does not order any valuable databases.

Almost all graduates (9) are working in ISMA as lecturers, so they are satisfied with the overall doctoral study process. However, experts are doubtful about the programme. On the one hand, it is good that ISMA is giving a work place for graduates, on the other hand, it is questionable if the quality is good enough (if students are not employed by any other academic institution). Experts did not find minimum requirements of a doctoral programme until the defending procedure of doctoral thesis. Additionally, a short description about promotional thesis (7 pages) was sent, but it included only main requirements on writing a doctoral thesis.

Doctoral students know about possibility to use Erasmus+ mobility grants, but experts did not have any statistical data if any student used this possibility.

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

Experts have doubts that doctoral study programme meets the minimum requirements for such kind

of studies. Study subjects contents and used scientific literature do not correspond with minimum requirements. Most importantly, doctoral students are only partially involved to do research, and after that publishing papers in scientific journals. Experts conclude that students are not well prepared for an individual scientific work.

Strengths:

1. There are big groups of doctoral students.
2. There are international and Latvian students.

Weaknesses :

1. In all descriptions of study courses, there is a need to update information on sources.
2. A low number of elective subjects.
3. A low number of foreign visiting scholars during the teaching and research process.
4. A low number of Ph.D. students involved in research projects with the provision of financial support.
5. Low numbers of mobility of Ph.D. students.
6. No access to publications in different databases: Web of Science, Science Direct, SCOPUS databases, etc.
7. A variety of teaching methods is low. For administration, it is recommendation to organize seminars on the usage of different study methods.
8. A low number of graduates.

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

#### **Analysis**

A more detailed description of resources is included in the analysis section of the study direction (3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field).

Based on the information provided in the self-assessment report (SAR p.57), ISMA uses only private funds for study provision.

The financial calculations of the study programme included in the description of the programme show that ISMA will be able to successfully implement the study programmes if the planned number of applicants is admitted. The positive financial results of the last years allowed one to allocate additional funds for the implementation and development of the study programme, as well as for the use of study materials and scientific infrastructure.

The learning process occurs in ISMA building in Lomonosova street 1, building 7. Study infrastructure is appropriate and available for every native and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block. The existing material and technical base allows to fully ensure the necessary conditions for the implementation of the study programme. Lectures take place in spacious conference halls, auditoriums, computer classrooms. The auditoriums are equipped with high-quality visual equipment. In addition, doctoral students may use desktop computers in the reading room of the ISMA Library. Internet is provided to students and guests. Moodle system use 100% of academic staff and students for the learning process and communication.

All students and academic staff have access to library with a spacious reading room and e-books, its total stock is about 4,500 books, as well as current periodicals. Library provides access to 25 open access scientific databases and platforms, such as Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, Open Research Library, etc. However, it is necessary to underline, that ISMA does not provide the access to publications in the Scopus, Web of Science and Science Direct scientific databases that would be

necessary for doctoral students and academic staff research activities.

15 educators are involved in the study programme. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general.

Both students and academic staff can participate in annual ISMA organized conference "Open Learning and Distance Education". ISMA also hosted the Erasmus + Staff Teaching and Training Week at ISMA.

Inspections of material and technical infrastructure carried out during the visit in general gave a positive impression of ISMA infrastructure quality. Overall, the study foundation, information base, materials and technical base and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions, creating preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, however, it is a lack of scientific literature and no access to the popular scientific information and data bases, which is absolutely necessary for doing good scientific research.

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

The resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the academic doctoral study programme "Business Administration" are adequate. There is a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support. All the students and the teaching staff have an access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process. ISMA established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students.

In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes, however, it is a lack of scientific literature and no access to the popular scientific information and databases, which is absolutely necessary for doing a good scientific research.

Strengths:

1. Study resources and provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of this study programme;
2. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general;

Weaknesses:

1. No access to the scientific publications in various databases, i.e. Scopus, Science Direct and Web of Science.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

The Law of Higher Education Institutions describes the requirements for the academic staff. According to ISMA report, the academic staff involved in a Business Administration doctoral programme consists of 15 staff members, all of them holding a doctor's degree. ISMA self-assessment report notes that 5 lecturers are experts of the Latvian Council of Sciences. However, experts found only 1 lecturer listed in the Latvian Council of Science database online as the expert in social sciences field.

The quality of the teaching staff has been increased by increasing the number of elected staff members. There are also 2 invited professors from Ukraine and Bulgaria that are involved in doctoral thesis supervision. Additionally, Prof. Petrova is involved in the course "Actual problems of Management". 5 members of the teaching staff (out of 15) have degrees in computer science, engineering and mathematics, 5 in economics and 5 in other social sciences. 13 teaching staff members are involved as doctoral thesis' supervisors and there are 2 members that are involved as doctoral thesis consultants. 10 out of 15 members of the teaching staff are also involved in teaching courses to doctoral students. The background of the teaching staff is suitable for their taught courses.

The doctoral programme is offered in Latvian and English languages. All teaching staff has a sufficient level of English (between B1 and C2) and Latvian (B2 - Native, except for 2 invited professors). 4 of the staff have a C2 level of English which is considered basically a native level. However, during the interviews experts noticed that the level of English of the staff was significantly lower and translators assistance was required. Thus, experts question the teaching staff's qualifications in terms of delivering the programme in English language.

The scientific work is extremely important in doctoral studies, both from the student and teaching staff perspective. The experts searched for the publications of involved staff and only a few members of the staff had recent publications (2019/2020 and newer) available online as well as only a few of the members of the staff were listed as first authors, meaning, main contributors of the work. Additionally, some of the publications are available only in Russian language. Only a few of the members of the staff had their researcher's profiles available (such as ORCID or on Google Scholar). Most of the publications that experts could obtain were publications in conference proceedings. It seems that ISMA is active at promoting the participation in conferences (own ISMA-organized conferences and international conferences), however, publishing in high-level international journals has not been prioritized. As the level of conferences and their proceedings (and peer-review process) is hard to determine, these types of publications are not good indicators of a good quality scientific work. The lack of research activities and publications indicates the gap in the research activities that are essential for a successful doctoral programme. The involvement of the teaching staff in scientific projects is rather limited - at the moment experts could indicate only a few ongoing projects related to sustainability and biodiversity, smaller projects related to ICT involvement in education (role and funding unclear) but the outcomes and their effects on a doctoral study programme or involvement of doctoral students are not explained. Collaboration with doctoral students in terms of scientific/applied research generally is unclear. Additionally, thematically the projects are not well connected to the doctoral programme. There is a lack of project management database which would allow a clear overview of past, current and upcoming projects, involved stakeholders, role of ISMA staff and funding sources. Additionally, project initiation, leadership and finance obtained are not listed as requirements for academic career advancement.

Even though the obtained degrees of the teaching staff are relevant and meet the requirements, experts were not able to identify the specialisation of the teaching staff which is usually visible through the scientific publications. It is, thus, unclear how well the scientific work and teaching of the courses are aligned and how scientific work of teaching staff and students contributes to the doctoral programme.

Also, as stated in the previous study programme evaluation forms, the collaboration between teaching staff for study course/module alignment is ensured through programme discussions in Council meetings, Department meetings and informal meetings with academic staff. Additionally, further development of methodologies and academic staff competences are developed through local

ISMA conferences such as Erasmus+ staff teaching and training week or "Open Learning and Distance Education". However, it is unclear, how, for example, newest developments in the industry are included in the teaching or how courses are adjusted to the (personalised) needs of doctoral students, based on their research topics. Thus, a more structured procedures, connecting curriculum, scientific work and results' implementation would be necessary.

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

Even though the level of the teaching staff seems to be sufficient on paper (everyone holds a doctor's degree), it seems the scientific research is significantly underdeveloped in current practices. Only one of the academic staff is an expert listed in the Latvian Council of Science in this study field, which is not acceptable. From the teaching staff perspective, the following strengths and weaknesses are identified:

Strengths:

1. Good level of academic background of the teaching staff;
2. Sufficient workload in terms of students per teaching staff (over 3 students/teaching staff).

Weaknesses:

1. Only one lecturer is listed as an Expert in the Latvian Council of Science under social sciences field;
2. English language knowledge level is low, thus, the quality of the programme in English is questionable;
3. Not enough involvement in relevant scientific research activities such as project initiation, leadership and finance obtainment;
4. Not enough dissemination of scientific results in relevant academic journals;
5. Not enough collaboration with doctoral students;
6. Not clear connections between research work and the rest of the doctoral curriculum.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Business Administration"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Complies with the regulations No.202 of the Cabinet of Ministers, "The process of issuing state-recognised higher education documents". The diploma sample is provided in "Description of the Study Programme "Business administration".

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The content of the cooperation agreements with BSA University of Applied Sciences and Ventspils University of Applied Sciences includes points on mutual cooperation in the field of studies and science and ensuring the continuation of the studies and evaluated as compliant.

Annex 3.6.\_Acknowledgement\_continuing\_Edu.pdf



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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

ISMA guarantees compensation for damages caused to the student if, due to ISMA conduct (act or omission), the study field “Management, administration, and management of real property” is not accredited or the licenses of the study programmes belonging to the study field are withdrawn, or the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. Annex 3.7.Acknowledgement\_compensation.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The programme is taught in both Latvian and English languages. Lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official (Latvian) language.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Testimonial on educators English language proficiency of at least at B2 level is provided in Description of the Study Programme (Other mandatory attachments/ 3.5.9.Acknowledgement\_language\_Dr.pdf). However, during the meetings it has been noticed that some of the lecturers lack the fluency of speaking in English language, so additional training efforts of improving the level might be considered.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Non-compliant

A statement is provided in Annexes that the academic staff of the study field “Management, administration, and management of real property” and the doctoral study programme “Business administration” is composed of not less than five doctors, at least three of whom are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the branch or sub-branch of the study programme grant a scientific degree. ISMA provides information about 12 lecturers with doctoral degree, but the only 1 professor from the list is with current status of expert the Latvian Council of Science in this study field. Annex 3.5.10.Acknowledgement\_Council\_of\_Science.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Non-compliant

In the annexes (3.5.11.Acknowledgement\_Section55\_Dr.pdf) is a statement certifying that the members of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme

"Business administration" (51345) of the study field "Management, administration and management of real property" meet the requirements specified in Law on Institutions of Higher Education, Section 55, Article 1, Paragraph 3. ISMA provides information about 12 lecturers with doctoral degree, but the only 1 professor from the list is with current status of expert the Latvian Council of Science in this study field. Annex 3.5.10.Acknowledgement\_Council\_of\_Science.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Does not comply with the regulations No.70 of the Cabinet of Ministers, "Terms and conditions to be included in the study agreement". A sample of study agreement called "Study Contract" is provided in annexes of the Description of the Study Programme - Other mandatory attachments (3.5.8.Study\_contract\_Dr.docx).

However, according to the "Procedures and criteria for awarding a doctoral degree (promotion)" ("Zinātniskā doktora grāda piešķiršanas (promocijas) kārtība un kritēriji" - available only in Latvian) latest version (30.04.2020) "Doctor of ..." is not Dr... anymore, but PhD.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study course descriptions and study materials have been prepared In the language in which the study programme is implemented (Latvian and English) and they comply with requirements ( 3.5.4. KA Doktorantura ENG.docx).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

There are 48 students studying in the programme. A document (Nr\_23\_ISMA\_dokt\_250 stud.docx) is provided, with the Opinion on commencing the implementation of the Doctoral study programme "Business administration" by ISMA University of applied sciences of the Council for Higher Education, that the programme is in compliance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, as the study program has less than 250 full-time students.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

In the II. Description of the Study Direction - 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation is available a list of publications written by the academic staff for the reference period, all lecturers have been publishing in reviewed editions in the last period. It would be much easier for the AIKA next experts' supervision if the list would be prepared for each study programme separately. All academic staff has either practical work experience or recent publications, however, most of the publications are in conference proceedings, thus the review process and quality level is hard to determine, what is not acceptable for the doctoral study programme.

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Non-compliant

Part of the requirements for doctoral study programme are fulfilled. Nevertheless, the sample of the study agreement have to be corrected according to the latest version of "Procedures and criteria for awarding a doctoral degree (promotion)". All academic staff has either practical work experience or recent publications, however, most of the publications are in conference proceedings, thus the review process and quality level is hard to determine, what is not acceptable for the doctoral study programme. Additionally, ISMA provides information about 12 lecturers with doctoral degree, but the only 1 is expert the Latvian Council of Science in this study field.

## **Requirements (R6-R8)**

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Study infrastructure is appropriate and available for local and foreign student, staff member, guest-lecturer, administrative block. ISMA is financially self-sustainable, thus admitting the planned number of students to the study programme it shall be able to carry out all the responsibilities. Study programme "Business administration" resources and provision in general comply with the study programme implementation conditions (SAR chapter 3 criteria 31.-3.3.). However, the full access to the modern scientific information and databases (for example, Scopus and Web of Science) is not provided.

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

**Assessment of compliance: Non-compliant**

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme does not comply with the study programme implementation conditions and the requirements of regulatory enactments. Academic staff (doctors of science - professors, associate professors) who are permanently elected ISMA staff, as well as guest lecturers from other Latvian and foreign universities, participate in the implementation of the study process have doctoral degree, but the only one expert is the expert of the Latvian Council of Science in this study field.

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

**Assessment of compliance: Non-compliant**

The study programme does not meet the minimum requirements for such kind of studies. Study subjects' content and used scientific literature do not correspond with minimum requirements for that. It is impossible to identify the connection between scientific research and doctoral programme studies. No innovative methods are used in doctoral study teaching. Experts indicate that ISMA does not provide the access to the newest scientific literature to doctoral students or lecturers as the current access that was demonstrated during the visit, is limited to the name/abstract and citations. Also, doctoral students are only partially involved in the research and scientific publications afterwards. So it means that doctoral students are not prepared for an independent scientific work.

**Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

ISMA doctoral study programme "Business Administration" has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. The programme is conducted in Latvian and English in the form of full-time studies. Based on the provided statistics, there are 48 students in 2020.

The study programme does not meet the minimum requirements for the level of studies. Study course contents and used scientific literature do not correspond with minimum requirements for that. Most importantly, doctoral students are only partially involved in the research and scientific publications afterwards. So it means that doctoral students are not prepared for an independent scientific work after graduation.

The resources and provision provided for the successful implementation of the academic doctoral study programme "Business Administration" are adequate. There is a good infrastructure for lectures, technical equipment and IT support. All the students and the teaching staff have an access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process. ISMA established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students. In general, the study foundation, information base (including libraries), material and technical base and financial foundation corresponds to the specifics of both the study programme and implementation conditions and create preconditions for the achievement of study outcomes. However, ISMA does not provides an access to full publications in scientific databases: Web of Science, Science Direct, SCOPUS databases, etc.

Even though the level of the teaching staff seems to be sufficient on paper (everyone holds a doctor's degree), it seems the scientific research is significantly underdeveloped in current practices. In the II. Description of the Study Direction - 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation is available a list of publications written by the academic staff for the reference period, all lecturers have been publishing in reviewed editions in the last period. It would be much easier for the AIKA

next experts' supervision if the list would be prepared for each study programme separately. All academic staff has either practical work experience or recent publications, however, most of the publications are in conference proceedings, thus the review process and quality level is hard to determine.

A statement is provided in Annexes that the academic staff of the study field "Management, administration, and management of real property" and the doctoral study programme "Business administration" is composed of not less than five doctors, at least three of whom are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the branch or sub-branch of the study program grant a scientific degree. ISMA provides information about 12 lecturers with doctoral degree, but the only 1 is expert the Latvian Council of Science in this study field.

#### Strengths:

1. Quite a large group of doctoral students;
2. There are international and Latvian students;
3. Study resources comply with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme;
4. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general;
5. Modern library, especially the reading room with many books and e-resources, which is available for students' individual work;
6. Sufficient level of academic background of the teaching staff;
7. Sufficient workload in terms of students per teaching staff (over 3 students/teaching staff).

#### Weaknesses:

1. The goal of study programme is not implemented in practice. Based on the information received during the interviews, experts concluded weaknesses in research activities and there were no signs for "modern research creativity" that is one part of goal defined for study programme;
2. Graduate survey analysis points to a low quality level of students and, based on that fact, the analyses in SAR section "1.2. Analysis and assessment of the statistical data on the students of the respective study programme, the dynamics of the number of the students, and the factors affecting the changes to the number of the students. The analysis shall be broken down in the different study forms, types, and languages" is not professional;
3. In all descriptions of study courses, there is a need to update information on sources;
4. A low number of elective subjects;
5. A low number of foreign visiting scholars during the teaching and research process;
6. A low number of Ph.D. students involved in research projects with the provision of financial support;
7. Low numbers of mobility of Ph.D. students;
8. A low number of graduates;
9. No access to full publications in scientific databases: Web of Science, Science Direct, SCOPUS databases, etc.
10. Variety of implemented teaching methods is low. Experts recommend to organize seminars on the usage of different study methods;
10. Not enough involvement in relevant scientific research activities such as project initiation, leadership and finance obtainment;
11. Not enough dissemination of scientific results in relevant academic journals;
12. Not enough collaboration with other doctoral students;
13. Low level of English language knowledge;
14. No clear connection between the research work and the rest of the doctoral curriculum;
15. From all involved academic staff the only 1 is expert the Latvian Council of Science in this study

field.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Business Administration"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Poor

## 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business Administration"

### Short-term recommendations

1. Ensure compliance with regulatory enactments regarding the teaching staff members of the Latvian Science Council.
2. Involve professors with expert rights in Latvian Council of Science in the study field "Management, Administration and Management of Real Property".
3. Make corrections in the sample of the study agreement.
4. Provide the description, terms and criteria of qualification improvement for teaching staff.
5. Provide the clear description, terms and requirement criteria for doctoral students for each semester.
6. Establish ISMA doctoral council on the acquisition of promotion rights or make an agreement with any HEI that has a doctoral council.
7. Create clear standards for dissertation defense, quality of dissertations.
8. Create norms and requirements for academic staff in terms of doctoral student supervision.
9. To improve the quality of the study programme, a clear screening and selection process of students, suitable for the doctoral programme should be established.
10. Improve collaboration between students and faculty staff both on research and social level. This could be done through joint projects, mentoring relationships, formal communication of programme's expectations and social events.
11. Ensure access for students and teaching staff to Scopus, Web of Science and Science direct databases and full publications.
12. Encourage industry and student collaboration to bring in the latest knowledge from the industry and to advance evidence-based practice.
13. Ensure clear connections between student research work and doctoral curriculum
14. Improve English language knowledge of the academic staff.

### Long-term recommendations

1. Continuously update library resources to ensure up to date information flow for students and teaching staff.
2. Introduce a clear procedure for teaching staff collaboration, especially in the implementation of the study programme and ensure interlinked study course cooperation.

3. Create a motivation system for academic staff to do research and publish papers in valuable journals.
4. Expand international cooperation with experts and academics and attract them as visiting lecturers and involve in research cooperation.
5. Develop the cooperation with internationally recognized universities, teachers, and industry experts relevant to the study programme.
6. Organize seminars for teaching staff on the innovative teaching methods.
7. Include scientific publications and international conference attendance obligatory for the lecturer career advancement.
8. Administration should assess the roles and qualifications of dissertation committee members, the composition of the committee and training of the committee to ensure the doctoral programme is relevant and of a good quality.
9. Establish quality assurance processes specifically for doctoral students to make sure that students receive all necessary skills to become independent researchers and industry experts.

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

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

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

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:		Partially compliant	<p>ISMA has a Quality Policy, defined and approved by the Senate, which aims is to increase the efficiency of ISMA operations, to organise and systematise internal processes and procedures, to help staff and stakeholders to understand their role and increase their motivation to engage in the development of ISMA activities. The description of the quality management is provided in the SAR (pp.17-18), but a full text of ISMA's Quality Policy is available at <a href="https://isma.lv/images/FILES/ISMA_Kvalitates_politika_2020_EN.pdf">https://isma.lv/images/FILES/ISMA_Kvalitates_politika_2020_EN.pdf</a> This was confirmed by the information gathered during meetings with the highest leadership of the university, students, and directors of study programs which were executed in a 'questions and answers' format.</p> <p>Internal quality assurance system is compliant with the Latvian legislation in general. However, there are limitations to the system as experts were not able to determine continuous feedback loops that are necessary for continuous improvement. Some processes (discussed in the previous sections) were unclear.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant		Cooperation agreements with private enterprises, government organizations, NGOs, HEIs, and scientific institutions serve as evidence of cooperation, including cooperation in the provision of internship places, and organisation of traineeships provided in the plans of study programmes. ISMA has established strong cooperation with different institutions from Latvia and abroad. But the list of the partners should be revised based on achievements and the need to cooperate with local and foreign institutions.
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).		Partially compliant	ISMA is not involved in any scientific project at the moment. Teachers participate in scientific and practical research work, projects, conferences, the publication of monographs, however, the publications of academic staff in journals which are indexed in WoS and Scopus is not high (3 publications in the year 2016, 14 publications in the year 2017, 8 publications in the year 2018, 9 publications in the year 2019). Higher targets should be placed for promoting excellence in research such highly ranked scientific journals (i.e., those with high impact factor) as well as publishing in top field journals in Economics, Management, Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Tourism, Real Estate etc.
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.	Fully compliant		Mostly all recommendations were implemented and experts can agree to the justification provided by ISMA on partially implemented recommendations regarding the necessity to join both bachelor programmes. The Experts' conclusions were simply based on the interviews and documentation provided during the visit.

### 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)



<b>No.</b>	<b>Study programme</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)</b>
1	Entrepreneurship in the Field of Real Estate (41345)	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Average
2	Business Administration in Tourism (42345)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
3	Business Administration (42345)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
4	Business Administration (47345)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
5	Business Administration (51345)	Non-compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant	Poor

### **The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts**

There were no cases of experts' disagreement during the evaluation of the study field "Management, administration and Management of Real Property".