

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Red Cross Medical College of Riga Stradiņš University

Study field: Health Care

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

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The Red Cross Medical College (here and after College) of Riga Stradiņš University (RSU) is a professional higher education institution overseen by Riga Stradiņš University and in the responsibility of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia.

The College offers first level professional higher education programs, creating the possibility to acquire a high quality education that meets the requirements of the Bologna Process Principles, the European Union Directives and the labor market. In addition to the first level professional higher education programs, the College also implements the labor market demanded vocational education, vocational secondary education program and, in the context of lifelong learning, professional development and continuing education programs, all of which are important for the healthcare system in part due to the deficit of labor.

The mission of the College is to prepare high-quality health care specialists with competencies appropriate for the field and sustainable development, to be inclusive and based on humanitarianism, creating altogether a solid basis for lifelong learning and research.

The vision of the College is to be a modern, prestigious and recognisable educational institution in the field of health care and social welfare in Latvia and Europe. To achieve this the College has integral values that are the basis for the developmental process and those are honesty, responsibility, people, quality and sustainability.

The College has also endorsed Sustainability Policy, which is modeled on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Basic documents of state policy are taken into account in the planning of studies, professional secondary education, vocational education programs and professional development programs. In accordance with the goals of the state education policy, the directions of development determined in the College are: quality, digitalization and innovation, inclusion and sustainability.

The overarching long-term development goal of the institution is to provide a high-quality, internationally recognized study process, develop research activities, promote the continuous professional development of health care specialists in close cooperation with employers while respecting the ever changing conditions of the labor market.

The team of experts acknowledges that the institution has done an excellent work of providing quality education for the students and opportunities of professional development for the staff members. On the basis of the results of the evaluation process the team of experts recommends the following:

- 1) Review and supplement the study course descriptions paying close attention to the latest available literature.
- 2) Make sure that practical skill assessments of students are done effectively and also in the form of an objectively structured clinical examination (OSCE).
- 3) Regularly update cooperation agreements with local and foreign partner institutions.

- 4) Develop a motivational system for the teaching staff to participate in scientific research and use available funding from the College.
- 5) Develop an action plan for meeting the research goals set by the college (for example, the share of PhD lecturers, writing pre-reviewed research articles). Also training for academic staff on how they can use funding for scientific research.
- 6) Provide extra language learning (English) for both lecturers and students also for communication skills and read scientific articles.
- 7) Develop an exact mechanism with appropriate funding for attracting foreign students and teaching staff.
- 8) Create an expert position for the support of teaching staff, scientific application writing, joint international research, etc.

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

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

##### **Analysis**

1.1.1. The goal of the "Health Care" study field is to provide high quality studies in the first level professional higher education study programs. The goal of the study field is based on three national development planning documents: The National Development Plan 2020-2027; Guidelines for the Development of Education 2021-2027; "Future Skills for the Future Society" prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science and Digital Transformation Guidelines 2021-2027. 92% of graduates in the field of "Health and Social Welfare" are employed. The College provides high quality studies and scientific activities in the field of health care. This is evidenced by an international certificate which was granted to the College's quality management system, for compliance with The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) quality model requirements for internal quality assurance.

1.1.2. College has identified strengths, weaknesses and threats in self-assessment report (SAR) pages 22. -24. and 28. -29. In weaknesses they mention some external factors – lecturers/readers are employed in the field and might have lack of time to participate in research or are not motivated to be involved in research (apply for doctorate studies, do doctoral thesis, participate in scientific projects). In some programs it is not easy to find new lecturers, in some it is not a problem. There is insufficient activity and involvement from the guest lecturers in improvement of study programs due to professional workload. High drop-out rate of students after the first semester.

Actions from the College – support for colleagues who decide to do doctoral studies. They receive time off from College to concentrate on their studies, participation in international congresses are supported financially, and grants for research from College budget and extra financial support e.g. valuation allowances.

To eliminate the weaknesses related to the high drop-out rate of students in the 1st semester, the College, starting with the 2019/2020 study year, held face-to-face interviews with applicants, thus clarifying the applicant's intentions, reasons and motivation for studies. To facilitate the possibility

for employed students to combine work with the study process, every year the scheduling of lectures/classes is done earlier than previously.

To eliminate the weaknesses related to the workload of professionals – readers and insufficient involvement in academic work in Higher Education Institution (HEI) and the study process in general, from 2020, participation in methodological and administrative meetings was organized online or in a combined form (online + face-to-face) as a result, the attendance of readers increased significantly for different meetings and trainings.

1.1.3. All interviewed structures – students, graduates, readers and program directors assure that there is a huge support provided from administrative and technical staff when needed and in a productive way. Starting from training how to use IT programs and research databases to making changes in the schedule that would be suitable for all students, changing lecturers for courses (example in Therapeutic Massage – ergonomics lecturer was changed because there was lack of teaching therapists self-ergonomics in the previous course) and adding some extra course in the program if it is needed (e.g. first aid course was organized within one month for Therapeutic Massage students). Since the 2019/2020 academic year, the College has a new position – Study Process Organizer, whose direct responsibilities are to develop a schedule of lectures at the College. It is provided that schedules are suitable for all the lecturers who are employed in the field and it is organized on time to make time planning for the busy lecturers easier.

All programs in this study field have been adapted to newest up to date information, newest professional standards. If a new version of a profession standard is still in the approval stage, lecturers and/or program directors have been involved in document preparation and already have implemented changes in the program. If new equipment is needed, then a purchase is being made or another solution – for example, a possibility to use the equipment in a private practice of a lecturer in the program.

1.1.4. Admission of students to the College takes place in accordance with the College`s Admission Regulations, which are available here: [ADMISSION PROVISIONS.docx](#) - Google dokumenti. The procedure has been developed in accordance with Sections 45, 46, 47, Section 52, Paragraph 1, Section 83 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, CoM Regulation No. 846 “Regulations Regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes”.

Regulations for the recognition of competencies acquired outside formal education or through professional experience and learning outcomes achieved in previous education are seen here: [Regulations for the recognition of competencies acquired outside formal education or through professional experience and learning outcomes achieved in previous education at the Red Cross Medical College of Rīga Stradiņš University.docx](#) - Google dokumenti.

The decision on the recognition of study results is determined by the Study Program Council. A person who wishes to have the knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education, knowledge, skills and competences acquired through professional experience have to submit a completed application form addressed to the director of the study program (see SAR page 33). A person who wishes to have his/her previous learning outcomes recognized must submit a completed application form, which is available on the College's website: [iesniegums\\_ieprieks\\_apguti\\_studiju\\_rezultāti\\_2019.docx](#) (live.com). The Regulations for the assessment of study results are available here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/13OXUOvi\\_TFxqz5dIVKzvk2bD-7IVHwWU/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/13OXUOvi_TFxqz5dIVKzvk2bD-7IVHwWU/edit).

Regulations determine the procedure for the assessment of the study results to be achieved in the College, determining the assessment system, types and forms of examinations, and the rights and obligations of students and readers. Readers incorporate the requirements of independent studies and their assessment conditions into the descriptions of study courses. They, in turn, are registered in the e-studies environment Moodle, where these are available to students.

The College's Regulations on study procedures state that testing student knowledge and skills, depending on the specifics of the study course, may be organized through various tests and various forms of testing, namely, in writing; orally; computerized; in a combined form (for example, written and oral); in the form of an objectively structured clinical examination (OSCE).

During the College visits there were no gaps found, all involved stakeholders were well informed about procedures. The assessment is transparent and lecturers and students (also graduates) were able to describe the evaluation process – mostly tests for theoretical knowledge and specific protocols for practical knowledge/skill assessment (the OSCE method was not mentioned in the talks). Students are well informed about the evaluation before each course, they are informed about achievable goals and necessary skills they have to obtain during the course. Assessment of students' achievements and learning outcomes are logical and effective.

1.1.5. Methods, principles and procedures for assessing the achievements of students are transparent, clearly defined. Students are informed about the principles before each course – what are the goals, what is about to achieve and what is going to be assessed in what way. Information is available in the Moodle system and students are always well informed and prepared. Information during the visit was without gaps between students, lecturers, graduates and program directors. There is also a system on how to assess the practical skills, for example, in Massage Therapy there is a protocol that describes what skills are necessary to show during the examination. In the Moodle system are also shown the results of tests and exams and shown the weaknesses and mistakes and if it is not clear for the students, consultations with lecturers are available to discuss the mistakes and how to prepare for next tests or exams.

1.1.6. Observance of the principles of academic integrity is specified in the Regulations on Study Procedures and the Regulations on Academic Integrity, which are available here: 6. Nolikums par akadēmisko godīgumu\_2020.pdf - Google disks. " On 07.04.2021, the College signed a cooperation agreement with the developers of Turnitin plagiarism control. Extensive training for readers took place for the use of the programme, which was organized by the Turnitin training department Jason Gibson. After that, study instructions were created for both lecturers and students. Practical training was also developed. Turnitin system is synchronized with the Moodle e-learning environment and all uploaded lectures, presentations, essays and works are controlled automatically through the system. Everyone is informed about the procedure. The qualification works of the students are sent to and controlled through another anti-plagiarism system in the roof organization of the college – RSU. RSU has introduced and uses the Single computerized plagiarism control system of the Latvian higher educational institutions to check the originality of the content of the final work. Currently, RSU has signed a strategic partnership statement with the College, the University of Latvia and the Riga Technical University, as well as other HEI have begun cooperation to coordinate the principles of ethics and academic integrity.

During the remote State examinations and also in the Study courses final examinations, various solutions are applied, which ensure academic honesty even when taking the examinations remotely online. The College has considered digital, technological solutions such as Respondus Monitor and Lockdown Browser, which support the control of academic integrity, but after weighing all the pros, cons and security of personal data, College decided to use the resources of the administration staff as an observer when necessary.

If students have to complete the part of the State Examination theory in the Moodle, then students have to log in to the Zoom platform as well, students are asked to prepare a second side camera (for example smartphone) that covers the student's profile, is possible to see what devices or internet pages student keeps open on the computer screen during test. The commission, meanwhile, has joined Zoom and is watching the students in work (see SAR page 40).

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

The goal of the study field is based on three national development planning documents. The College provides high quality studies and scientific activities in the field of health care. This is evidenced by an international certificate which was granted to the College's quality management system, for compliance with The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) quality model requirements for internal quality assurance.

College provides support for colleagues who decide to do doctoral studies to increase motivation and to enhance more staff with doctoral degrees. College, starting with the 2019/2020 study year, held face-to-face interviews with applicants, thus clarifying the applicant's intentions, reasons and motivation for studies to reduce drop-out rates.

All interviewed structures – students, graduates, readers and program directors assure that there is a huge support provided from administrative and technical staff when needed and in a productive way. All programs in this study field have been adapted to newest up to date information, newest professional standards.

During the College visits there were no gaps found, all involved stakeholders were well informed about procedures. The assessment is transparent and lecturers and students (also graduates) were able to describe the evaluation process – mostly tests for theoretical knowledge and specific protocols for practical knowledge/skill assessment (the OSCE method was not mentioned in the talks).

Students are informed about the principles of assessment before each course – what are the goals, what is about to achieve and what is going to be assessed in what way. Information is available in the Moodle system and students are always well informed and prepared.

The College has signed a cooperation agreement with the developers of Turnitin plagiarism control. Extensive training for readers took place for the use of the program, which was organized by the Turnitin training department Jason Gibson. The qualification works of the students are sent to and controlled through another anti-plagiarism system in the roof organization of the college – RSU who uses the Single computerized plagiarism control system of the Latvian higher educational institutions to check the originality of the content of the final work.

### **Strengths:**

1. Clear definition of goals, they meet the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy.
2. Close cooperation with RSU.
3. Transparent process of student assessment.
4. The Study Process Organizer develops the schedule of lectures/classes at the College, it is provided that schedules are suitable for all the lecturers who are employed in the field and it is organized on time to make time planning for the busy lecturers easier.
5. Elimination of early drop-outs.
6. Support for lecturers who are doing doctoral studies.

### **Weaknesses:**

1. It was not very clear during the College visits how and what procedures are done for practical skill assessment of students, OSCE was not mentioned by any program director, lecturer or student.

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

### **Analysis**

1.2.1. The College has established a quality policy which is available here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BdSPFLixBVRvGxWnXWKmCblx4p4lqN4s/edit> and can be found on College homepage under the section College--> Documents ---> Quality management where it is accessible in Latvian.

Regarding the development and maintenance of the quality assurance system, all the necessary tools are in place and are implemented within the process. For example, the College takes into serious consideration the feedback provided by the students and graduates in order to improve the study process and quality of the courses within the study programmes. The College outlined their use of Moodle e-studies environment as a crucial part of successful study process provision for the students and lecturers. As it is stated within the SAR page 41, in 2018, the materials of studies were provided to students with the help of collective emails through various different platforms but now Moodle environment ensures that everything is accessible for all of the students in this platform. As stated during an on-site visit, it is so much easier now to navigate and make sure no information gets lost and all of the students have access to them. For the purpose of more effective communication the College has established a personalized email platform where every student and every member of the College staff has their own email and password where they can communicate with each other in case of need. In the process of implementation of the e-environment, it was of importance that everyone is advanced enough to use these tools, so since the academic year 2018/19 there is established separate Methodological Department that ensures that every student and lecturer has the access to all of the information, the system is understandable and in case of problems assistance is provided.

The existing system is effective and ensures that there is continuous improvement in place. One of examples that can be mentioned is by the students' proposed proposal to ensure notifications by the College that new information, materials or assessments have been added to the Moodle platform. This has been taken into consideration from the College's side and two years ago this option was also introduced as indicated within the SAR page 41.

During the on-site visit, various groups during the meetings mentioned that a very crucial part of the quality assurance process is observation of lectures. The director of the program, the deputy director of academic affairs and research, as well as the head of the methodological department, participate in lectures and give feedback to the lecturers of possible improvements. As stated by the academic staff, it is part of collegial action and training to learn from each other. It is a specifically important part of the learning process for the new lecturers who observe lectures by more experienced and senior colleagues. As indicated by the teaching staff during on-site meetings, there are two years as the requirement of having lecturing experience in order to be able to give lectures on College level by the law. It means that the person coming in definitely has some sort of background and experience in the field before coming in as the teaching staff. Overall, the teaching staff is happy that new lecturers join their team and wish to become a lecturer. In such cases, it is very common in their experience that the new lecturers observe those of larger experience and ask for advice when needed.

1.2.2. Regarding the mechanism of development and review of study programmes, the College follows the regulations that are set out by the Cabinet of Ministers according to the SAR page 44. Overall, when it comes to feedback mechanism, student surveys which include their feedback of the study courses of the study programmes is an important indicator of the quality and needs. In case some significant changes are needed within the programme, general review of the programmes happens once a year when specific and needed improvements are made.

As it has been stated within the SAR page 44-45, student surveys get conducted and analyzed on a regular basis once in a semester to gather their opinion regarding the study process, overall quality of the studies, lecturer performance and receiving possible recommendations and suggestions regarding the study process. During the meeting with administration and teaching staff, they

indicated that students were overloaded with surveys conducted more regularly, thus, they decided that they will combine various surveys together and do that one per semester. During the meeting with students, they clarified that they do not necessarily always wait till online surveys to reach out and suggest some specific changes. In some cases, students reach out themselves. There are various examples mentioned under 1.1.3. where student suggestions, ideas and recommendations were taken into consideration.

Graduates and employers are also involved in quality assurance processes. Graduates are asked to evaluate their overall satisfaction of the education process and their abilities to find work after graduation from the College. Another aspect asked to the graduates is whether they wish or plan to continue their studies after the graduation. The closest communication with employers directly is during the internship period when some of the College students do internships in the employers' clinic, hospital, pharmacy or other. During on-site meetings employers indicated that they reach out to the College and vice versa to clarify whether some improvements have to be made also within the study courses of the College according to the newest trends in the labor market. After every internship, employers provide individual feedback of each student's performance, acquired skills and what should be improved further on in the future. According to the SAR page 45, employers are also involved formally within the College processes as they are participating in the College Council meetings and Study Programme Councils.

Regarding development of new study programmes, since the previous accreditation, according to the information provided within the SAR page 45, the College has licensed 3 study programmes: Pharmaceuticals, Treatment with qualification Emergency medicine physician assistant and Therapeutic Massage. The College came up with such a decision because of the trends within the labor market and the industry. It was also advised by the employers to train and prepare specialists with specific professional skills in these fields.

Overall, it can be stated that the feedback mechanisms that are in place are logical and effective. All of the stakeholders – employers, graduates and students are involved in feedback mechanisms. As it has been indicated during on-site visits, all of the suggestions from them have been taken into account and heard. One of the students even mentioned that the College comes forward and asks whether some additional improvements or suggestions are there which are highly appreciated by them.

1.2.3. There is an effective mechanism in place for submission of student complaints and proposals. The College has established and implemented "Procedure for Submission and Review of Student Proposals and Complaints" which can be accessed on SAR page 46 or here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/10ti6A544JSUeLC4wMIbRv3\\_T3ysTnia/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/10ti6A544JSUeLC4wMIbRv3_T3ysTnia/edit). Students can submit their proposals and complaints individually or in groups which regard assessment of study results, quality or content of the studies, conduct of internships, organization of the study process. According to the SAR page 46, procedure is not applicable to questions regarding submissions for tuition fees, termination of studies and other official submissions, which are considered in accordance with the procedures provided for in the Law on Submissions.

The College has various procedures and regulations in place regarding the student complaint system. For example, in the SAR page 46, it has been indicated that there is a Clause 11 "Appeal" of the Regulations on Study Procedures which addresses that students can appeal assessment of the examination or the procedure for the examination until the end of the next working day, from the moment the assessment is announced.

The College has made an online format complaint and suggestion section within their webpage which includes a formal separate page which allows for the student to submit his/hers complaint or suggestion indicating their name, programme they are studying in, phone number, topic, e-mail, application that has to be uploaded with signed e-signature and possible comments that may be added to the complaint/suggestion.



In 2021, ZOOM meetings were implemented as a practice for the purpose of more successful communication with students within each of the study programmes. During these meetings students could raise their suggestions and complaints. Such meetings are organized once per semester. During on-site meetings with students, they approved that they receive feedback from the College and all the necessary information, summaries, and outcomes are published in Moodle. In case there are individual questions of specific students or groups of students, they receive individual emails on the improvement of the issue or problem that has arisen.

1.2.4. The College has a mechanism in place for the purpose of obtaining the necessary information from the students regarding various processes. The main purpose of course is to ensure that the quality of the studies is good and ensure that every shortcoming is eliminated. The results obtained during these surveys are analyzed and necessary improvements are done according to the received recommendations or suggestions. In the SAR page 47, there is an indicated document that outlines the procedure of provision for student surveys for the assessment of the quality of the study and learning process. The document is also accessible here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Awv0BaixldEmyDRoHOWq9uj\\_1p89xjYO/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Awv0BaixldEmyDRoHOWq9uj_1p89xjYO/edit). In general, the survey process is organized by the Methodological Department together with the Study Department. The results of the surveys are accessible for the students at the beginning of each new semester in Moodle in summary form. Students confirmed this information during on-site visits stating that the College takes the quality assurance process very seriously and its outcomes for the purpose of improvement. The survey results are used by lecturers in order to analyze their work and assess for themselves what might be improved in the future. While the Deputy Director makes annual evaluations of various processes such as academic and research work as well as how to improve the internal quality system. Analysis of the results of surveys are accessible within the SAR page 48.

During on-site meetings with employers and graduates, it became clear that the College has established close communication and relations with both of the stakeholders. As mentioned before, they regularly participate in internal quality improvement processes and provide feedback and suggestions for possible improvements that are taken into consideration later on in the process.

1.2.5. College has its own official website – <https://rcmc.lv/> – that includes the necessary information for students, lecturers, potential students and other interested parties. The College website includes an in depth outlook for the interested potential students for all of the study programmes. The information is provided both in Latvian and English and can be accessed here:

1. the study program Therapeutic Massage: <https://rcmc.lv/en/study-programs/first-level-professional-higher-education/therapeutic-massage/>;
2. the study program Treatment - <https://rcmc.lv/en/study-programs/first-level-professional-higher-education/treatment-physician-assistant/>;
3. the study program Pharmaceuticals - <https://rcmc.lv/en/study-programs/first-level-professional-higher-education/pharmaceuticals/>;
4. study program Treatment, Qualification: Emergency medicine physician assistant - <https://rcmc.lv/en/study-programs/first-level-professional-higher-education/emergency-medicine-physician-assistant/>.

As previously noted, students and lecturers use Moodle e-environment as the platform of exchange of information and communication. For both of these groups, most of the information is provided there. Every person has their own login and password. In case of some changes, students can see changes in course schedules, exam plan, summaries of previous year's surveys and other necessary types of information.

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

The College has established a well-functioning quality – assurance system that is effective. There is a quality policy in place as a document but the available quality assurance policy was not found on the College website, instead the one found was a policy of RSU. Student surveys get conducted regularly and student suggestions and recommendations are taken into account. There is a Moodle e-environment in place where all the necessary information is being provided for an effective study process. Students, graduates and employers all are involved in quality assurance. Students can access summaries of survey results in the Moodle environment. Information regarding study courses and study programmes offered and detailed description is accessible on the website of the College. There is a complaint/suggestion system in place where students can express their concerns or problems freely. Student suggestions are taken into consideration and changes are implemented accordingly.

Strengths:

1. Well-functioning quality-assurance system.
2. Students, graduates, and employers are involved in the quality-assurance process.
3. Effective complaint and suggestion system is in place.
4. All the necessary information regarding study courses and programmes is provided on the College website.
5. Survey result summaries as a feedback mechanism is provided to the students on Moodle e-environment.

Weaknesses:

None.

## Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

College has its own internal quality assurance system that is accessible here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BdSPFLixBVRvGxWnXWKmCbIx4p4lqN4s/edit> which sets goals for continuous improvement and development.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The College has established:

“Procedure for Submission and Review of Student Proposals and Complaints”; Procedure for surveys is outlined here:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Awv0BaixldEmyDRoHOWq9uj\\_1p89xjYO/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Awv0BaixldEmyDRoHOWq9uj_1p89xjYO/edit)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

There is a regulation in place addressing development and maintenance of the study

programmes and courses descriptions:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z7qN\\_jrVC0EBeo76L7YU6BOO531CHuhc/edit?rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z7qN_jrVC0EBeo76L7YU6BOO531CHuhc/edit?rtpof=true&sd=true)

There is an established survey system that ensures that all stakeholder opinions are taken into consideration and implemented for the purpose of improving the study programmes.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Student results and performance is evaluated at the end of each semester and compared to previous years. Survey results that are conducted within the students are accessible afterwards in the Moodle. The Deputy Director conducts analysis of survey results that are accessible.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Important part of work quality assurance within the College are lecture observations when lecturers observe each other's lectures and help to improve and implement new approaches.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

College conducts various forms of surveys and questionnaires regularly and after the process provides feedback to the involved parties. The same regards complaints and suggestions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

College takes highly serious feedback, recommendations and suggestions. Students gave examples of how College takes their suggestions seriously and are productive within the process. Students are satisfied with the study process and quality.

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

#### Analysis

1.3.1. The College has determined a system for the financial support required for the implementation of the study field and the study programmes. Financial resources of the study field consist of the State budget grant and own revenues. The College has received the performance financing under national law (Procedures for Financing Institutions of Higher Education and Colleges from the Funds of the State Budget). The College budget determines the annual financial plan which is approved with the Ministry of Health and RSU. Control over the use of financial resources takes place according to the procedures specified in the College Regulation, College Accountancy Policy, as well as approving financial plans and reports with RSU and the Ministry of Health. The College state budget is audited by an independent external audit every year.

Distribution of the funding is different for different programs. The largest percentage of own

revenues is generated by the study programs “Therapeutic Massage” and “Pharmaceuticals”, which can be explained by the fact that these programs have less budget than other first-level professional higher education programs and they are very popular with the students, as well as highly appreciated by employers. It is concluded from SAR (page 51), own revenues have grown steadily with each year.

The College has been devoting 1% of its funding to scientific activities since 2015, which represents a significant encouragement of scientific research. In addition to the core funding, the College also received performance funding during the previous strategy period, which is allocated for investments in the development of research activities in universities and colleges.

During the interview the director and Deputy of the Academic and Research work confirmed that the College has a financial provision of scientific research. They finance the scientific publications of academic staff, teachers, students, and their participation in international scientific conferences. The Deputy of the Academic and Research work described the system for funding scientific research, the Grant system, and outlined the effectiveness of this system.

However, during interviews with the representatives of the academic staff it is not clear how this funding system of scientific research is implemented in practice. All staff confirmed that they are supported financially from the College budget, but couldn't provide specific examples. It seems that the system of funding of scientific work in the College is not fully transparent to them.

1.3.2. The infrastructure resources, material and technical support necessary for the implementation of the study field are identified in the college and are at the disposal of the College. The College has a well-developed infrastructure that fully corresponds to the requirements of the studying field and programs. In particular, there are many study classes that are completely equipped with modern, updated materials, devices, simulators, and moulages. All resources are available to students and teaching staff. This has been confirmed during the interview with the Directors of the Study programs, students and teaching staff. The College has a unified system and procedures have been established for the improvement and purchase of material, supply of the training laboratories, methodological, informative, etc. provision.

With the end of the 2019/20 academic year, the College and the European Regional Development Fund project “Modernization of the STEM educational program infrastructure at the Red Cross Medical College of RSU” has been successfully completed. The College's simulated environment and lecture halls have been modernized with the European Regional Development funding. Students have the opportunity to practice on several multifunctional training mannequins, such as muscle, subcutaneous and venous injection, heart rhythm, breathing type auscultation and advanced care skills mannequins. College classrooms are equipped with modern study equipment and that is especially important, this new modern equipment allows remote studying in high quality. Simulation rooms were opened in 2019, they provide students with situations as close as possible to the internship/work environment. Special rooms are equipped with video and audio recording devices, where students can be observed, and any corrections can be done by the teachers. These rooms are very good for assessment of practical skills. There are special rooms for simulation negotiations which are also equipment with video and audio recording functions.

The College has not only common rooms for any of the programs, but different training rooms adapted to each program, as well: training pharmacy, two anatomy laboratories, massage laboratory, laboratory of clinical manipulations, hygiene, laboratory examination, plastering laboratory, procedures laboratory, laboratory for provision of first aid and emergency assistance, clinical skills self-study room for students, microbiology laboratory, operational emergency vehicle simulation, laboratory for pregnant women and maternity care, museum store-room, simulation laboratory, CH children care laboratory, clinical skill self-learning room for students, laboratory for clinical manipulations – digestion, prophetic audience, vacuum packing laboratory, clinical skills audience-multifunctional, simulation meeting room, laboratory for clinical manipulations-surgery,

laboratory of clinical manipulations/simulations. Full description of the equipment is given in the Annex, No. 14.

There are special rooms for self-studying and training of clinical skills. During the interview the students confirmed that they often use these spaces, especially during preparation for the exams. They pointed, that these rooms often are busy, which proves their importance. From 2021/22 academic year, the College has an additional clinical skills self-study room for students.

The College takes care of repackaging equipment where possible. Special room is equipped with a vacuum packing device and is for reuse of inventory and equipment, simulating an understanding of sterility, thus allowing students to practice aseptically removing reusable equipment. This strategy saves resources – real medical devices and kits that are used, but can be reused for training purposes by refurbishing the packaging.

In 2019, at the request of the College's anatomy lecturers, a computerized interactive program was purchased for anatomy studying – Anatomy next. AnatomyLabs 3D anatomy training program includes such sections as head and neck muscles, chest skeleton and muscles, abdominal, arm and leg muscles.

The College has modern, constantly updated technical provision. Local wireless network was modernized in 2019. The college has 26 Wi-Fi access points, including student rest areas at the Library and the practical laboratories. At the end of 2021, additional 8 Wi-Fi network access points were installed. The College has two especially moving cameras for lecturers to broadcast practical lessons live on the Zoom platform. There are free-access computers at the library for independent work. Loom, a Google product, is used to record audio-video lectures (without the presence of students). This program was already popular among lecturers, because the first training took place at the end of 2018, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In cooperation with RSU, the Panopto video recording system is also used for the preparation of audiovisual teaching materials. To conduct online classes, the College uses Zoom Education licenses as well as Zoom Pro.

The College has different modern computer equipment, that are used for studying purposes: stationary computers – 94, monitors – 93, laptops – 24, tablets – 4, tablets/notebooks – 2, interactive boards – 6, cameras for simulations – 9, NVR for simulations -2, TV on the wall – 8, portable TV on the wheels – 5, server -1, projections – 15, printers – 13, card printers - 4, conference room equipment (projector, motorized projection screen, audio amplifier, audio subwoofer, wireless microphone and audio system, wires microphone and audio system).

According to the Interview with the Director of the College, Deputy Director of Administrative and Development Issues – one of the preferable directions of the strategy in the College is further improvement, modernization, updating of the existing material base, equipment, simulation centers, and recovery of used equipment.

1.3.3. In general, the College library has been part of the RSU library since 2011. All library resources of the RSU are shared with the College. College academic staff and students are completely provided with literature, information resources and services. The library collection consists of more than 122 000 printed materials – books, magazines, papers mainly in the fields of medicine and health sciences. The College has a well-organized and equipped local library area at its disposal. From September 2017, students have access to work areas for independent work in the College premises, which are equipped with a desk lamp and electrical sockets. The students and teaching staff have full access to books, databases from the main building of the College, which is very convenient.

28 online databases are available to students and teaching staff: AMBOSS (Medical Learning System Platform), ClinicalKey, AccessMedicine, Ebook Central (ProQuest), BMJ Journals, SAGE Premier 2018 Magazine Collection, Wiley Online Journals, PsycARTICLES, EBSCO (The Multiple Academic Databases), The C Library, DynaMed Plus, ProQuest Journal Collection Health Research Premium Collection, ScienceDirect Journal Collection, SCOPUS, Web of Science, ProQuest Dissertations &

Theses Global: The Sciences and Engineering Collection, Letonika, LETA news archive, Nozare.lv u.c. Elsevier ClinicalKey and McGraw-Hill AccessMedicine, a subscription database for the medical industry, provides an unlimited number of RSU users with key educational literature and manuals in both the basic medical sciences and specialties. Subscribed multidisciplinary databases offer e-books from a variety of industries from different publishers, providing results of selected information by searching on a wide variety of topics/keywords. RSU subscribed ebook databases: Access Medicine, ClinicalKey, Ebrary eBooks, EBSCO, Letonika.

The library is open at different times, which is very suitable for students. It works from Monday to Wednesday, from 9.00 to 17.00 o'clock, on Tuesdays and Thursdays – from 11.00 to 18.00 o'clock, on Fridays – from 11.00 to 20.00 o'clock. The library is open also on Saturdays, on the first and third Saturday of each month, from 12.00 to 16.00 o'clock. In order to ensure the continuous provision of the study process, during the state of emergency, students had the opportunity to remotely reserve and receive books at home without visiting the library. Every year, the College is entitled to submit a booking request for replenishment of the RSU Library collection directly for the needs of the College students up to 5000 EUR. Within the study course "Research", the RSU library specialists regularly give students an informative lecture on how to work with databases, how to navigate them and how to better find information using filter functions.

Lecturers and Study Program Directors have to submit their book requests. Every year, the College draws up a request for books and periodicals necessary for its study process. Further this request is handed over to RSU. Library resources and different databases are available for the teaching staff and for students, this was evident from interviews with teaching staff and students of study programs.

1.3.4. The College has well developed technical support. Different modern computer technologies are used in the educational process. The main information and communication platform of the College is the e-learning program Moodle. Moodle was implemented in the 2018/19 academic year. Since 2018/19 e-learning environment Moodle became obligatory and the number of used functions increases every year. The Moodle program is constantly updated, supplemented with new functions that are successfully used in the educational process by teaching staff. It is notable that students are satisfied with the Moodle platform; they pointed out many advantages of this e-studying tool. Students of different courses and programs mentioned that Moodle is a very convenient system where they can always find information about all courses, news, schedules, presentations, Zoom links, etc. One of the important advantages is the transparency of the grading system.

The lecturers widely use Moodle to share activities and resources, teaching materials, record assessments, and schedules. Many collective and individual trainings, consultations in setting up the Moodle functions were provided. Main purposes of these meetings are the introduction of new methods of e-learning, implementation of the new functions in the Moodle system, etc.

In 2018, the e-learning environment Moodle was adapted so that it could easily accommodate lists of lectures and classes, lists of examinations and pre-exam consultations, and lists of state examinations for students. The Moodle e-learning program was adapted to provide feedback to students on survey summaries. These changes made the e-learning environment more practical to use. On the front page news to inform students and lecturers about the news in the College are regularly published.

Submission of independent papers in the e-learning environment Moodle is appreciated, because student papers accumulate in one place, they can be easily edited online, and the date of upload can be tracked. The evaluation is also immediately linked to the Moodle grading book, which was very welcomed by the lecturers.

Electronic tests in the College are based on the principle of primarily creating questions in a Moodle question bank. Electronic tests became especially popular at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, when students were not writing papers in the classroom. The Moodle test setting offers a wide

variety of question categories. Moodle tests open questions (quiz) can be added to the "check academic integrity system on Turnitin" option. In the development of electronic tests, lecturers mostly need regular support from the E-studies Secretary.

The e-learning environment Moodle is regularly updated in July, when the College does not have an active study process. Starting from 2021/22 along with system updates, Moodle improved function – attendance records. The e-learning environment Moodle as online learning was a very good support tool for lecturers and students during COVID-19 as well. All information and exchange of study materials was organized through the e-learning portal Moodle.

Lecturers had to register all Zoom online schedules in the Moodle e-environment, sorting them by topics, adding the date according to the schedule of lectures and adding the material of the lecture. This procedure is monitored on a daily basis. As the College purchased Zoom Education plan licenses during the distance learning process, in this case the lecturers do not have to create Zoom links on the Zoom.us website, but it can be done directly in the Moodle system. This option is especially acceptable for lecturers, as it saves time and attention to copy the invitation link from the Zoom website to Moodle. A further tool used is Panopto, which is specifically used in the Treatment study program. The Loom app has been the most used. Zoom and the I spring free cam app have also been tested as alternatives to audio/video recordings. The College has actively used other tools to organize the distance learning process. One of the most important has been audio/video recordings, where lecturers share their presentation on the screen without the presence of students and hold the respective presentation.

The Director of the College discussed their plans regarding further development and implementation of the information and communication technologies in the study process. The E-studies Secretary presented the Moodle e-platform during the visit. Students and teaching staff also confirmed that they successfully used e-learning programs offered by the College.

1.3.5. The College has defined procedures for recruitment of qualified teaching staff. The process of selecting lecturers of the College is determined by the Regulations on Academic Positions. The number of academic staff positions at the College is determined by the director complying with the requirements of the Law on HEI's and other state regulatory enactments, the College's study direction development plan, study program implementation plans and financial calculations.

The College's Council upon the proposal of the Deputy Directory in academic and research work announced an open competition for the positions of academic staff. A competition for the vacant academic positions is announced via the homepage of RSU, homepage of College and the newspaper "Latvijas Vēstnesis". Both residents of the Republic of Latvia and other countries are entitled to apply, if they have a command of the State language at the level sufficient for teaching.

The selection procedure is described in detail in the Regulations on Academic Positions. Same Regulations provide for the procedure for commencing the employment relations with the selected candidates. Amount of work (load) of the elected academic staff is determined before the beginning of each academic year by the order of the College Director according to the calendar plan of the respective academic year and workload cards. It is specified one week before the beginning of the academic year on the basis of the students' admission results. If needed, the approved amount of work may be adjusted also during the academic year, and such corrections shall be approved by the order of the College's Director.

During the interview the Director of the College noted that the process of attracting new qualified staff remains one of the most serious problems. This can explain the relatively small number of lecturers.

1.3.6. The College's administration controls the quality assurance of the lecturers. At the end of the calendar year, the academic staff has to undergo assessment interviews with the Deputy Director on academic and research work regarding the lecturer's performance, achievement of the goals set in

the previous year, goals and objectives for next year. Students feedback, assessment about the courses taught are discussed with the lecturer. Such reports are prepared every semester and personally sent to lecturers via e-mails before the interview, so that the lecturers can make themselves prepared. During the interview, the lecturer's involvement and activity in the seminars, trainings organized by the College are discussed, on-line or in person. Observations are also planned on the remote platform by monitoring Zoom e-lectures of the person to be observed.

Professional development trainings are organized and provided by the College:

- 1) trainings developed within the College with the participation of the Methodology Department from the year 2018/19;
- 2) thematic cycles created by RSU Professional Development Center;
- 3) courses/seminars organized by other institutions;
- 4) courses organized by the College attracting external professionals. Interviews with teaching staff and program Directors have proved conducting training.

The Methodology Department regularly conducts a survey of the academic staff in order to find out what professional development courses and seminars the lecturers would like to attend. In order for the lecturers to use the e-learning environment tool Moodle more effectively, the Methodology Department organizes both training and individual consultations. In order to improve the research skills, a workshop for both lecturers and qualification paper supervisors is organized on topics of research designs and research methods.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, training and workshops on the use of digital, remote platforms were performed. The improvement of lecturers' pedagogical skills as well as the development of digital skills is assessed both in individual job evaluation interviews with the Deputy Director in academic and research work, and by interviewing students and conducting repeated observations.

1.3.7. The academic, research and administrative workload of the teaching staff is matched to each other. The structure of academic staff positions consists of senior lecturers, lecturers and assistants. Number of lecturers at the College is 122: 13 Senior Lecturers, 22 Lecturers, 8 Guest senior lecturers, 48 Guest lecturers, 31 Guest assistants. For this job group a workload card is applied. The contract is concluded for the employment period (the study year or 1 semester). In the period from 2015 to 2021, the number of elected academic staff has increased by 11 %, which is related to the increase in the numbers of the study programmes.

Analysis of the lectures workload in the period from 2014/15 until academic year 2020/21 showed that the total load has gradually increased since 2014, except for 2020/21, which has been influenced by the reform of nursing education, stipulating that in the future, nurse qualifications can only be obtained in a university bachelor's degree program. In the initial years, the biggest workload has been for senior lectures, but in recent years for lecturers. Changes in the composition of the teaching staff are planned with the aim that the lecturers will increase the pedagogical, methodological and practical provision of the study course for students.

1.3.8. The College has different forms of the support available to students. By the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of August 24, 2004 No. 740 "Regulations on Scholarships," College students who show successful academic records obtain a number of credit points provided for the respective semester of the academic year and have registered for the semester can receive a state budget scholarship. Students paying a fee may be entitled to a tuition fee discount. Tuition fee discounts are made available to the applicants of the College's paid study place considering the current demographic situation and provide material support to students in case of socially justified need. The discount is granted by the College's tuition fee application rules.

The Student Self-government operates in accordance with the Student Self-Government Regulations, the latest version of which was approved by the College Council on the 26th of September 2019. The Self-Government consists of College students to represent and protect their



interests, to facilitate the public life of the College and to promote the effectiveness of the study process. The operation of the Self-Government is aimed at creating a high-quality study process and student-oriented approach in the College.

Support system in the study process consists of mentors (representatives of academic staff) and senior students. A mentor is a representative of the College's academic staff, who implements the mentoring process, develops social ties between students to create a closer sense of belonging to the College, which also influences academic success and sustainability in the acquisition of the study program.

The College has a Lifeguide program, which was established in 2014 with the aim of helping first-year students to integrate into the study life of the College. Each academic year, within the framework of this program of two weeks, the Colleges' first-year students were provided with the opportunity to receive support and answers from their most experienced colleagues to various questions related to the study process, possible activities in the College and other issues relevant to them.

As for career support the College is actively involved in the career planning process of both prospective and current students by actively organizing career support events for both school students and College students. "Open door-days" are held every year.

Psychological support: at the beginning of each academic year, adaptation events take place where students are introduced to the study premises, the content and form of the educational process, meetings with lecturers and administrative staff take place. There is friendliness, understanding and mutual respect in the relations between the administration, lecturers and students.

Support for students with special needs. The College has taken certain measures to make it accessible to persons with disabilities. The College provides the possibility to enter the building personally by the use of a ramp. Moving on the floors is provided by a stair lift. The College's largest classroom is equipped with hearing loops (amplifiers) that convert the incoming sound source signal into magnetic oscillations so that hearing aid users can hear sound without background noise in the full range of sound frequencies required for comprehension.

Support for the avoidance of drop outs. The project 'Pumpurs' has been implemented since 2017 (ESF project "Support for the avoidance of drop outs", No. 8.3.4.0/16/I/001). The project provides support and advice to reduce the risk of early dropouts. In addition, lecturers have the opportunity to engage in supervisions to learn the latest methods of working with learners, whose daily risk factors for early dropouts are noticeable.

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

All of the indicators of the study field are in compliance with requirements. The College has established a system for determining and redistributing the financial support required for the implementation of the study field and the corresponding study programmes. The infrastructure resources and material and technical support necessary for the implementation of the study field have been identified in the college and they are at the disposal of the college. Resources are available to students and teaching staff. A unified system and procedures have been established for the improvement and purchase of material, methodological, informative, etc. provision. The College has procedures for the improvement and purchase of methodological and informative provision. Library resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of the study field. The information and communication technology solutions used to ensure the study process are appropriate and effective. The College has defined, implemented and followed procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff, they are open and the stakeholders involved are informed about them. The academic, research and administrative workload of the teaching staff is balanced. The College has identified the necessary support for students and a functioning support system has been established to meet the needs of students.

#### Strengths:

1. The college has a well-developed infrastructure that fully corresponds to the requirements of the studying field and the programs. There are many studying rooms that are completely equipped with modern, renewed materials, devices, simulators, mouldages.
2. All resources (equipment, any technical devices, library devices and databases and etc.) are available for teaching stuff, for students.
3. Well equipped modern areas for self-studying – good opportunity in preparation of the exams.
4. Technical support that is necessary for implementation and development of the programs is modern and sufficient.
5. The College has the procedure for the improvement and purchase of studying materials, library resources.

#### Weaknesses:

1. A system for funding scientific research is defined, but academic staff don't realize completely how this system is implemented in the College.

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

#### **Analysis**

1.4.1. The applied research directions in the field of study (applied research directions in SAR page 74-75; for examples of this applied research project, see SAR page 76-77) fully correspond to the mission of the higher education institution / college (see SAR page 5). Research contributes to the acquisition of new professional information as well as to the development of related learning. The strategy for meeting the goals set out in the College Curriculum Development Plan (2021-2027; for example, the Pharmaceutical Curriculum: to promote the involvement of lecturers in projects and research) remains unclear.

1.4.2. Scientific research is well presented in the SAR chapter 2.4 and the document was also confirmed and supplemented by the study program directors and teachers in the interviews. The results of the research have not only been used in the development of the specialty in cooperation with professional associations, but also new information is used in the development of study programs of all levels. Linking applied research to the learning process is logical and justified, and this was confirmed by meetings with teachers as well as students.

1.4.3. The College has several partners, for example in Lithuania and Estonia, with whom it cooperates closely in the framework of development projects (this SAR chapter 2.5), but in the future, due to underfunding of research in all Baltic countries, closer and more meaningful cooperation in applied research should be considered. Language learning (English) would be helpful, which would facilitate, among other things, international co-operation in the field of research, as well as publication in peer-reviewed journals. International co-operation in the field of research could also help to achieve goals in the Development Plan (f.e. cooperation with partner universities abroad).

1.4.4. The College values research by directing 1% of its funding to scientific activities annually from 2015 (see SAR page 7), creating an opportunity for project funding up to EUR 10,000 (see SAR page 80), organizing an annual international scientific conference for students and formulating specific research directions for the years 2021-2027 (see SAR page 74-75), between which, among other things, students can choose the topics of their dissertations. Both lecturers and students/alumni provide specific examples of how the results of the research have been used in the development of the study process. In addition to conferences, research results are also reflected in the meetings of professional associations, which provides an opportunity to develop the profession.

As there are five academically elected lecturers with PhD degrees and seven lecturers also in PhD studies (see SAR page 81), the competence to conduct research is available in the college and opportunities for this are also provided, for example, by creating grants and providing financial support. In recent years, few lecturers have published in peer-reviewed journals (mainly only conference theses as publications; see Annex No 13) and thus the achievement of the goal (publication in a peer-reviewed journal for six years) is questionable. However, in order to achieve 25% of teachers with PhD (see SAR page 15) and high-level publications, the College needs a stronger strategic action plan.

1.4.5. See student involvement in 1.4.4. Students feel that they have the opportunity to contribute to research and professional development if they are interested, and the corresponding explanation is also described in the SAR document on pages 82–83.

1.4.6. The College has modern study conditions (practice classes, simulated environment, library) and tools for conducting studies as well as individual practice/learning, including the possibility to use databases while studying at home (student feedback interview); Moodle support is widely used in theory learning and assessment (including self-tests; see SAR chapter 2.3.4). The Methodological Department has been established in the College (see SAR pages 13 and 31), which supports both beginning and experienced lecturers in finding the best and most suitable learning and assessment methods (including self-tests in Moodle and Kahoot) in a rapidly changing situation. The introduction of innovative assessment methods, such as the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), could also be considered more in the future.

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

The applied research directions in the field of study correspond to the mission of the higher education institution, but the strategy for meeting the goals set out in the College Curriculum Development Plan remains unclear. Linking applied research to the learning process is logical and justified, and this was confirmed by meetings with teachers as well as students. There should be more international co-operation in the field of research and development, and this would require more attention to be paid to the English language skills of teachers and students. Lecturers and students are involved in applied research projects; in order to achieve 25% of teachers with PhD (see SAR page 15) and high-level publications, the College needs a stronger strategic action plan. The College has modern study conditions and tools for conducting studies as well as individual practice/learning, including the possibility to use databases while studying at home, at the same time, more use could be made of innovative teaching and assessment methods.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The College provides annual financial (incl. grants) and technical (incl. databases) support for research.
2. The College holds an annual international scientific conference.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. The English language skills of teachers and students may remain an obstacle to international research collaboration and the writing of peer-reviewed research articles.

### **Assessment of the requirement [2]**

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

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

Despite shortcomings in some aspects of academic staff involvement, the scientific research work conducted in the College generally meets the requirements of a modern and sustainable process with future potential with adequate financing and provisions.

## **1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

1.5.1. During the period under analysis the College has developed extensive cooperation both locally and abroad. Focusing on the analysis of local cooperation it is worth noting that these include contracts with educational institutions (higher and vocational education), contracts for the provision of traineeships, a variety of different service contracts, cooperation contracts with other administrative institutions and institutions involved in the assessment of quality and academic integrity.

The College has also been involved in participation in the organizing of continuing education events for preparation and implementation of training programmes for specialists involved in treatment, supportive roles and pharmaceutical care service. Some of the presented contracts have already expired (or expiry date is not specified) which complicates the assessment.

1.5.2. Within the context of Erasmus+ program, a positive aspect worth mentioning is extensive description of activities during staff mobilities. Detailed outline of the activities is provided which facilitates further evaluation of these events. A positive aspect here is that both administrative and teaching staff are involved in the exchanges.

The College combines regular strengthening of existing cooperation while maintaining the diversity of partner institutions and partner countries (Poland, Greece, Estonia, Finland, Portugal, Lithuania and France among others). Cooperation within the KA107 (Key Action 107) subprogram has also been implemented (Israel). Another positive aspect is the annual International Week event hosted by the College. This gives the opportunity to directly embed general directions for joint work on site. The number of outgoing Staff mobilities tends to increase but the number of incoming Staff mobilities is relatively small and highly variable. More intensive involvement of 1st year students in the Erasmus + program is advisable. There is a small number of implemented virtual mobilities during the COVID-19 pandemic period. The number of incoming and outgoing student mobilities in the College is stable (except for the COVID-19 period).

1.5.3. The mechanisms for attracting foreign lecturers and students have not been described in detail. Only commitment to work on it in the future is given. The criteria for student selection was given during the interviews and these include study results, attendance of classes, English language skills, activity in the College events and interview results. For Staff members the criteria are as follows: academic performance, English language skills, activity in the College events and interview results. The given criteria are sufficient for adequate selection of participants and ensures quality during the exchanges.

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

The College has successfully established a wide network of cooperation with other local institutions, which provides a wide range of opportunities for the implementation of various projects.

Extensive cooperation with a large number of foreign partner institutions is also executed and future plans include an increase in this field as well.

Selection process for exchange participants is made and implemented but a detailed procedure for attracting foreign lecturers and students is needed immediately.

Strengths:

1. Wide range of services and cooperation opportunities available with both local and foreign authorities and institutions.

Weaknesses:

1. Part of the cooperation agreements have not been updated and are therefore useless in the assessment of the present situation.
2. Exact mechanism for attracting foreign students and staff members is lacking.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

There is a positive tendency for the College to develop cooperation with both local and foreign institutions. However some of the documents need updates and detailed procedures for attracting more interested parties from abroad is needed.

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

#### **Analysis**

According to the SAR page 93, in 2012, a joint expert report was prepared for the study direction "Health Care" for two study programs "Nursing" and "Medicine". During the previous accreditation process, three study programmes were licensed which were as follows: "Therapeutic Massage" in 2015, "Pharmaceuticals" in 2016, and "Treatment" in 2017 with a qualification of "Emergency medicine physician assistant". No recommendations were provided regarding "Therapeutic Massage" and "Pharmaceuticals" study programmes. There were 7 recommendations proposed regarding the "Treatment" study programme with a qualification of "Emergency medicine physician assistant". There is also a joint programme of "Therapeutic Massage" which is implemented in RSU Liepāja branch as a joint study programme with College. It was accredited in the RSU Liepāja branch on 08.05.2017 till 08.05.2023. There has been received a recommendation regarding this joint programme as well which has been added to the recommendations for the purpose of look through within this accreditation process. So, altogether, there are 8 recommendations that have to be looked at.

First recommendation received for the study programme "Treatment" with qualification "Emergency medicine physician assistant" has been regarding option provision for the students to have at least one more optional study course. The College has taken into consideration this recommendation and according to their internal procedure, they have had a Student Programme Council meeting in which result, optional course "Digital skills" was added to the study programme. This course is also an optional course for all study field "Health care" study programmes that are accredited in the College. Thus, it can be said that this recommendation has been fulfilled successfully.

Second recommendation addressed a list of study literature, their topicality and correctness. The expert group recommended supplementing the literature list with more recent editions of books putting an emphasis on study courses that have to follow international guidelines. During the process of implementation of the recommendation, the responsible persons of each of the study courses reviewed and updated the study course literature lists in course descriptions. Necessary adjustments were made and then ensured by the Study Programme Director that lecturers have made these adjustments, and later these changes were approved and reviewed at a meeting of the

Study Programme Council. This recommendation also has been fulfilled.

Third recommendation the College received was regarding supplementation of the study course “Emergency Situations in Paediatrics”. According to the SAR page 95, the College was recommended to include topics on the peculiarities of injuries in children and the provision of EMS for children with polytrauma; to include a practical lesson on providing immobilization for children of different age groups, including the use of spinal immobilization boards, a vacuum mattress, an extraction device and a hard immobilization collar. The College states that the hour distribution has been revised at the meeting of the Study Programme Council and that the study course has been supplemented in its study course description. Although, the expert team during the review of the study course hourly division did not notice the changes that have been indicated. It might be the case because of the overall study course general overview provision that does not allow to see in detail the topics addressed in each of the lectures.

Fourth recommendation addressed necessary improvements in the study course “Work Organization in the EMS Operational Management Center”. Previous expert group advised the College to review forms of the study course implementation and distribution of hours between the topics. The College has taken into consideration the recommendation proposed together with some suggestions from the employer's side. The implementation process of the changes was ensured by the Study Programme Director and adjusting the changes in the Moodle e-environment.

Fifth and sixth recommendation also addressed study course hourly division in the subjects of “Clinical procedures in physician assistant’s practice and Propedeutics” and “Emergency situations in surgery” (“Emergency situations in traumatology and microsurgery”). In “Clinical procedures in physician assistant’s practice and Propedeutics” course, the College reviewed the hourly division in the meeting of the Study Programme Council and restructured the distribution of the contact hours with students later on adjusting the course on Moodle. In regards to the “Emergency situations in surgery” (“Emergency situations in traumatology and microsurgery”) course, the College was requested to envisage a larger number of hours for the topic “Spine, pelvic trauma, polytrauma, patient immobilization, transportation”. The lecturer viewed through the division of contact hours and adjusted the course according to the expert recommendation which was revised by the Study Programme Council and updated on Moodle.

Seventh recommendation was regarding long-term development of the study programme “Treatment” with qualification “Emergency medicine physician assistant”. Previous expert group advised the College to address the issue of possibilities to provide practical training in the care of patients with polytrauma in the Emergency Department of the University Hospital. According to the SAR page 97, The College negotiated with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science to increase the cost of one student budget place in order to cover the possibility of offering students the Eastern CUH Emergency Department as an internship location. In result, the College concluded the cooperation agreement on the provision of student internships in 2012 which got extended in 2017 till December of 2022.

Eighth recommendation addressed study programme “Therapeutic massage” and opportunities of the graduates of this programme to continue their studies further in another higher education institution. Previous expert group outlined that it is not possible for the graduates of this programme to continue their studies in any other institution after graduation. The College indicates that not all of the students wish to study further after graduation and it depends on the plans of the student regarding their career wishes. In fact, students do have the possibility to continue their studies if they wish so. They can take examinations and enter the RFF or other higher level study programs in health care. In the study process, certain relevant previously acquired study courses can be equated. In that way, graduates of the College can continue their studies in other RSU health care higher level study programmes.

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

Overall, the College has taken into consideration almost all of the recommendations and implemented them fully within the study programmes. There is only one minor in clarity regarding the third recommendation which addresses the study course of “Emergency Situations in Pediatrics”. The study course outline does not include information that has been recommended to be implemented within the study course but it is not seen as a weakness at this point but rather an in clarity due to general course descriptions that do not outline all of the study hour division of topics. There have been significant improvements made within the study programmes since the last accreditation process.

**Strengths:**

1. The College has worked on eliminating the weaknesses of their study programmes, in particular study programme “Treatment” with qualification “Emergency medicine physician assistant”.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Assessment of the requirement [4]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Overall, all the deficiencies and shortcomings have been addressed. Only minor problem is that it is not clear regarding the study course “Emergency Situations in Pediatrics” whether the recommendation is implemented as the information stated in the SAR is not compliant with what is accessible in the study course description. It should be overlooked.

**1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field**

**Short-term recommendations**

Review and supplement the study course description of the study course “Emergency Situations in Pediatrics” to ensure that previous recommendation from the previous accreditation is taken into account and implemented.

Make sure that practical skill assessments of students are done effectively and also in the form of an objectively structured clinical examination (OSCE).

Update cooperation agreements with local partner institutions.

Develop a motivational system for the teaching staff to participate in scientific research and use available funding from the College.

**Long-term recommendations**

Develop an action plan for meeting the research goals set by the college (for example, the share of PhD lecturers, writing pre-reviewed research articles). Also training for academic staff on how they can use funding for scientific research.

Provide extra language learning (English) for both lecturers and students also for communication skills and read scientific articles

Develop an exact mechanism with appropriate funding for attracting foreign students and teaching staff.

Create an expert position for the support of teaching staff, scientific application writing, joint international research etc.

## **II - "Treatment" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Treatment" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

2.1.1. The study programme "Treatment" with the qualification "emergency medicine physician assistant" complies with the study field of "Health care" indicators, conditions and criteria. The length of the implementation of the study program, which is two years, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and practical experience to enter the labor market.

2.1.2. The title of the study programme is "Treatment" in the study field "Health care" with education classification code 41721. The professional qualification given after finishing the studies at the college of the first level professional higher education study program is the "emergency medicine physician assistant". The College emphasizes that the additional title used for this profession is "paramedic" which has been used in the past to refer to the diplomas valid in the field, which were once obtained in medical schools. The aim of the programme is to prepare socially responsible emergency physicians with all the necessary professional knowledge and skills, who are capable of providing emergency medical assistance in need and follow the norms of ethics regarding patients. The learning outcomes are based on objectives which include knowledge, skills and competencies. The results that wish to be achieved are in line with the aim, tasks and qualification of an emergency medicine physician's assistant. Admission requirements are all outlined within the homepage of the College. As stated in SAR page 111, the previously acquired education is either medical practitioner with professional secondary or first-level professional higher education of physician assistant. The requirements for the admission of the academic year 2022/23 are available in the SAR page 110. It can be stated that all of the indicators are interrelated and effective. As indicated in SAR chapter 2.1.1., the study duration is two years and the language of implementation is Latvian. During the study process, students must acquire 80 credit points. As the professionals are specifically meant to be prepared only for Latvian labor market and for the purpose to prepare specialists who are working in parallel with their studies, graduates already in the field, gaining practical skills since the first study year, the parameters set are seen as justifiable and reasonable.

2.1.3. According to information provided in SAR p.106, there have been a few corrections made in the study programme parameters within the assessment of the study field. The College has outlined a comparison of them in the SAR outlining a comparison between study years 2017/18 and 2021/22. The main components have remained the same: General education study courses (20 CP); Branch study courses (36 CP); Internship (16 CP); Qualifying paper (8 CP).

The changes introduced have been done in Part C which are Professional Development Courses. There has been a new course implemented called "Patient Safety" in the amount of 2CP. In 2018/19 a new study course was introduced called "Fundamentals of management and teamwork" in the amount of 1 CP. As a result, the study course "Resuscitation and Intensive Care" was reorganized from 2 CP to 1 CP.



2.1.4. The study programme is in demand and the specialists after graduating the programme are needed all over the country and specifically in the biggest cities of Latvia. According to the publicly available information, the demand for EMC physician assistants will remain high in the future. Table No. 36 in the SAR page 112, shows information regarding significance of the graduates of the Emergency physician assistant programme and the increase in the last years of the number of the students by regions of Latvia. During the last years, the increase has been by 40 people. According to the information provided in the SAR page 112, the EMC medical graduates will not need to worry about unemployment. Currently, the data also shows that the unemployment level is very low. The table No. 37, outlines the numbers of graduate employment in the SAR page 113. It shows clearly that there is a very low unemployment number with the lowest percentage of all the colleges in RSU which is a good indicator of unemployment rate being only 1.16%. There is no separate data per qualification. During the last study years, there is also a steady increase in the number of students - 55 students were admitted in 2017, reaching a maximum of 81 students in 2018, but in 2019 there is a decrease, 64 students, which the College explained by the fact that in the study year 2019/2020 there was no winter admission. Although, the dropout rate in 2021 compared to 2018, was higher by 11%. In 2018, the dropout rate was 16% while in 2021, 27%. It was explained due to the huge workload, especially during COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1.5. N/A

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

All of the indicators of the study programme are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study programme. There are no specific shortcomings indicated. Everything is in compliance with the criteria. Minor aspect is that there is an increase of dropouts but it is due to COVID-19 pandemic which is understandable.

Strengths:

1. High demand for EMC physician assistants in the labor market.
2. Ability for graduates to find a workplace easily and work.
3. Increase in the number of students in the last years.

Weaknesses:

1. Increase of dropouts by 11%.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The study courses provide the knowledge necessary for the performance of all tasks of professional activity as well as promote personal growth. The study programme complies with the requirements of the State Higher Education standard - the strategic goal, scope, its distribution and duration of implementation. Opportunities to continue studies, appropriate principles of acquisition evaluation and the scope of practice are also provided. The distribution of subjects/topics is in accordance with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the amount of theoretical and practical knowledge of students who acquire the competence of the professional higher medical education program in medical treatment. The inclusion of teamwork and leadership skills is especially noteworthy as these competencies are essential generally and in the context of recent COVID-19.

The mapping of study courses provides extensive information on their compliance with the study results to be achieved (knowledge, skills and competences). The position of the study course

"Introduction to the specialty and professional ethics" creates confusion, as it is not marked as to be integrated into clinical practice (in the knowledge section). The given course is only indicated in the practice section (in the section on competencies).

As a positive aspect, the descriptions of the study courses indicate the information about the platform used in the case of the distance learning process. The literature of the study courses includes resources in both Latvian and English, however, some of it is older than 10 years. The specifics of the given discipline (frequency of its publication) must be taken into account in the analysis of the indicated literature.

The description of the content of the study program includes all the most important disciplines of emergency medical care (intensive care, reanimation, toxicology, catastrophe medicine, medical technologies, as well as the practice module), which correspond to the competencies mentioned in Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 268 (Article 597).

The aims and tasks of the study program are developed in cooperation with professional organizations and employers (Emergency Medical Assistance Association, Emergency Medical Assistance Service) this ensures its connection with the real requirements of the labor market.

In addition to the basic competencies of the profession, the goals of the study program also include modern health care and personal development of students.

The first of the above is implemented by providing students with a modern instrumental and technological base for acquiring skills, while the second is done through supporting the continuation of education to obtain 2nd level higher professional or academic education, the necessary lifelong learning and general pursuit of knowledge, developing active information acquisition methods, and emphasizing national and universal moral norms.

The objectives of the study program include the theoretical knowledge (articles 597 and 598) and practical skills (articles 597 and 598) of the competences (articles 596 and 598) mentioned in the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 268.

Supervision of the implementation of the study program and its quality is ensured by the head of the study program, a specialist of the methodological department, the study program council and the internal quality council. Involvement of several parties ensures its quality and analysis from multiple perspectives.

The content of the study program corresponds to the competencies specified in the Professional Standard. During the interviews, information was obtained on the compliance of the study courses with the requirements of the labor market. This is ensured by maintaining intensive feedback with the labor market. The process is implemented through various questionnaires.

Representatives of the College have also participated in the development of state-level regulatory documentation in cooperation with other administrative institutions.

Theoretical lectures together with practical classes (both in the College and other institutions) contribute to the achievement of the study program goals. This type of organizing the study process allows students to effectively prepare for the actual situation in the labor market.

#### 2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. The studies are organized in the form of theoretical lectures and practical classes; an e-learning platform is also used. During the interviews it was found out that possibilities to use different cell phone applications (Kahoot and others) in conjunction with distance learning platforms (Zoom, Panopto) were used during the period of Covid-19 pandemic. This helped to effectively reduce the idleness of students during the remote lectures.

Student-centered approach is respected by organizing regular surveys for study process quality. Results of aforementioned surveys are analyzed by both the Department of Study Methodology and the teaching staff members. Necessary changes are implemented in a timely manner. Students are also provided with all required information at the start of every study course (distribution of theory

and practice, criteria for evaluation, types of tests etc.). Information about changes in the study schedule is provided via email.

Student knowledge is tested with both formative and summative assessment methods. Skills are tested with simulation games (in the form of different role plays). Students are also required to do independent work with medical documentation. Involvement of the students is achieved by organizing discussions on different topics. The wide range of teaching methods listed above ensures the quality of studies both on-site and remotely.

2.2.4. During the interviews it was found out that the internships are organized in close cooperation with the partner institutions and the students have to fulfill all the academic obligations before starting the internship. Before the start of internship, students are instructed about the process and during the internship there is an opportunity to report problems if they develop.

The institution has developed a comprehensive internship program documentation that includes strictly defined type of the internship, purpose, tasks and results to be obtained. This serves as an example of good governance because it leaves out individual interpretation and thus possible conflict situations.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. In the process of development of student qualification papers, emphasis is placed on their practical application. The decision on the compliance of the selected topics with the study program is made with the involvement of students, teaching staff, representatives of the College administration and labor market delegates. This ensures that qualification paper topics are relevant to the study field.

The College offers students information on the available research directions and topics for qualification papers. Statistics on the selection frequency is also collected which in turn gives the ability to avoid conflicting similarities and “exhaustion” of some of the more popular topics.

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

The content of the study program is topical and it respects the latest tendencies in the labor market. The implemented study methods contribute to the achievement of the goals and results of the study program.

Student internships are implemented effectively with both timely instructions and provision of necessary equipment and placements.

The topics of student qualification papers are topical and relevant to the study field. Decisions for these topics are made with the involvement of multiple parties which contributes to the topicality.

Strengths:

1. Detailed mapping of the content of study courses, which corresponds to the individual descriptions.

Weaknesses:

1. Some positions in study course mapping create confusion with regards to differentiation between knowledge and skills.
2. Some recommended literature is older than 10 years.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

None.

## 2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

### Analysis

2.3.1. The infrastructure, informative provision (library resources), financial provision, material and technical fully comply with requirements of the study program "Treatment" (qualification "Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant") and demonstrate achievements of program learning outcomes. The buildings are equipped with teaching classrooms, spaces for group work, library, and laboratories relevant to the specifics of the program. The College technological equipment, Internet connection, Wi-Fi coverage, etc. is in full compliance with today's College needs as well as with data safety principles. Library resources of the College are considerable, they are focused on informational support and provision of teaching and research activities of the professors, researchers, and students of the College. Students and staff have full access to the international electronic library databases. The existing environment at College is adapted for people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The program "Treatment" (qualification "Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant") has many modern equipped rooms for the effective conduct of theoretical and practical classes: two anatomy laboratories, laboratory of clinical manipulations, hygiene, laboratory examination, plastering laboratory, procedures laboratory, laboratory for provision of first aid and emergency assistance, clinical skills self-study room for students, laboratory for pregnant women and maternity care, simulation laboratory, CH children care laboratory, clinical skill self-learning room for students, laboratory for clinical manipulations – digestion, vacuum packing laboratory, clinical skills audience-multifunctional, simulation meeting room, laboratory for clinical manipulations – surgery, laboratory of clinical manipulations/simulations. Full description of the equipment is given in the Annex, No. 14. The College has not only common rooms for any of the programs, but training rooms adapted to the program "Treatment" (qualification "Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant"). The operational emergency vehicle simulation room opened in 2020. The Operative Medical Training (OMT) simulation is fully equipped with an ambulance emergency vehicle that provides students with more effective means of mastering their clinical skills.

There are different simulation rooms: Vital sign simulations; Emergency simulations; Drug delivery simulations; patient transfer simulations; simulations of the use of technical aids; Simulations of care manipulations (full, partial bathing, hair, nail care, etc.); bladder catheterization and care simulations; Simulation of various heart rhythms, emergencies, injuries, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, first aid, urinary catheterization, patient feeding simulations through a nasogastric tube, wound care simulations, injury simulations, suturing and removal simulations, simulations of opening a sterile vacuum packaging, setting a sterile tray field, tracheostomy care simulations. The program's room has many body and body parts moulages for different purposes, for example, full-body moulage – for non-electronic imitation of CVC, "NURSING ANNA" for simulations of care procedures and vital signs, emergency medical transport simulator, which simulates a NMP team with identical internal equipment.

The program Director confirmed that the program is fully equipped, it has all necessary equipment, modern, technically designed classrooms, and technical provision. Library resources and databases are available for students. They will plan to purchase more simulators, increase library resources, and develop in this direction. All resources are available to students and teaching staff. This has been confirmed during the interview with the Directors of the Study programs, students and

teaching staff. All resources in place and their availability are further described in SAR (chapter No. 3, Resources and Provision of the Study Field).

### 2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. Total financing for the program 'Treatment' (qualification "Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant") has significantly increased from 2017: in 2017 – total financing was 74 699.85€, in 2020 – 165 185.85€ (see SAR page 122). From 2019 the studies were based on state budget or ESF funding (see SAR page 123). The planned costs per student for 2021-2022 are distributed as follows: remuneration – 1 846.99 (64.41%); remuneration of administrative staff – 538.08 (18.76%); remuneration of academic staff – 1 204.28 (42%); allowance for additional work – 104.63% (3.65%); compulsory employers' social security – 435.71 (15.2%); the cost of services – 379.45 (13.23%); costs of materials, energy resources, inventory – 205.4 (7.16%). The College budget covers all expenses.

The minimum number of students in this study program to ensure the profitability of the study program "Treatment" (qualification "Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant") is 20. The last admission was in September of 2020/2021, and included 49 students. Total number of students at the study program "Treatment" (qualification "Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant") is 36. Number of dropout students is 13 (Program Annexes, No. 3). It is evident that the program has sufficient students to generate sufficient income.

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

The infrastructure, informative provision (library resources), financial provision, material and technical fully comply with requirements of the study program "Treatment" (qualification "Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant") and demonstrate achievements of program learning outcomes. The funding available to the study programme and the use of funding ensures full implementation of the study process, the study programme has the minimum number of students to ensure the profitability of the study programme and facilitates the development of the study programme.

Strengths:

1. Programme is provided by necessary infrastructure and technical equipment required for achieving programme learning outcomes.
2. The college has well-equipped lecture halls with projectors and computers and a Simulation Center, working spaces for students, including free access to the library's resources.
3. The medical simulation rooms have been renovated and were equipped with moulages to provide the necessary materials for the implementation of the program.

Weaknesses:

None.

## Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study provision, informative provision material and technical provision, financial provision

with the conditions for the implementation of the study program and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The preparation of lecturers complies with the requirements for the implementation of the curriculum and the provisions of normative acts. As a large part of the lecturers also work professionally in the field of health care (as heard in meetings with teachers), which ensures close cooperation of lecturers with employers and modern professional know-how. However, ensuring the pedagogical competences of part-time teachers is a concern. The Methodological Department has been established in the College (see SAR pages 13 and 31), which supports both beginning and experienced teachers in finding the best and most suitable learning and assessment methods (including self-tests in Moodle and Kahoot) in a rapidly changing situation. Lecturers also have the opportunity to learn from each other (incl. collegial observation, see SAR page 131) and participate in various (including pedagogical) training at the RSU. Nevertheless, there is no clear system for guiding beginners to teacher training.

2.4.2. The changes in the composition of the teaching staff are related to changes in the content of the study programme. New lecturers have the opportunity to participate in the School of Young Lecturers to promote the ability of participants to independently implement innovative initiatives in their study courses (see SAR page 130).

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. As 3 lectures with PhD (see SAR page 125), the competence to conduct research is available and opportunities for this are also created by College creating grants (see SAR page 80) and directing money to research. No lecturers in the Treatment curriculum have published in peer-reviewed journals in recent years (see annex No. 13) and thus the achievement of the goal (publication in a peer-reviewed journal for six years) is questionable. During the reporting period, the composition of the teaching staff has changed, mainly by changing the visiting teaching staff and electing teaching staff in academic positions at College. Therefore, it can be assumed that the lecturer has not yet made a sufficient contribution to research and publication. Many of them also work professionally more than the last 5 years (for example in a clinical environment). The necessity and importance of maintaining professional practical experience in addition to teaching work was pointed out by the lecturers themselves as well as students and alumni. Language learning (English) would be helpful, which would facilitate, among other things, international co-operation in the field of research, as well as publication in peer-reviewed journals. Although the motivation of lecturers for research by the college and the annual collection of results in the field of research can be read in the SAR document on page 130, it is not clear from Appendix 13 that the lecturers of the Treatment curriculum have contributed to the publication.

2.4.5. Regular monthly meetings between teachers, collegial observations (see SAR page 131), close co-operation with employers (feedback from employers during the interview) ensure close co-operation in the curriculum, including the sharing of teaching methods and experience.

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

The preparation of lecturers complies with the requirements for the implementation of the curriculum and the provisions of normative acts. The changes in the composition of the teaching

staff are related to changes in the content of the study programme, new lecturers are provided with training opportunities in cooperation with RSU. In addition to teaching experience, many lecturers also have professional work experience, e.g. in a clinical environment. Lecturers work closely with each other, as well as with employers. Although the lecturers and the college are ready for research, it seems that the lecturers of the Treatment curriculum have not made a significant contribution to the research.

Strengths:

1. Close and consistent cooperation between lecturers and with employers.
2. The opportunity for teachers to train themselves, close cooperation with the RSU.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of involvement of lecturers in research.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The collective of the teaching staff meets the requirements of regulatory acts and the principles of a modern educational institution, the relatively large number of PhD students and PhDs in it is particularly positive. Close cooperation between lecturers and self-training opportunities in cooperation with Riga Stradiņš University is significant for strengthening cooperation.

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

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study program fully complies with the Cabinet Regulations No.141 "Regulations on the first level Professional Higher Education State Standard".

See E-platform 3.2.Content and implementation of studies, attachment 3:

3\_Treatment, qualification Emergency medicine physician assistant\_Compliance with the national professional higher education standard.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Study course descriptions are in line with the requirements set forth in Section 56.(1), Paragraph two and Section 56.(2), Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. But some of the literature listed is outdated. That is why the requirement is partially compliant.

Studies in college in the program "Treatment" are in Latvian language. All necessary documents are prepared in Latvian language.

See point 3.2.Content and implementation of studies, attachment Nr. 7

7\_Ārstniecība ar kvalifikāciju Neatliekamās medicīnas ārsta palīgs studiju kursu apraksti.zip

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Diploma issued complies with Regulation of Minister Cabinet Nr.202, according to which state recognized documents of higher education are issued.

Point 2.2. attachment nr 2.

See sample added in point 3.2.Content and implementation of studies: attachment 1

1\_Treatment, qualification Emergency medicine physician assistant\_diploma and diploma supplement.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

See point 2.1. Study field management, attachment nr. 11 in e-platform:

11\_Confirmation of the adequacy of the academic staff's knowledge of the state language.jpg

No. 1-11/7, Riga. Director of Red Cross medical College certifies with her signature that the knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study program "Treatment" corresponds to 2009 of 7 July 733 "Regulations regarding the amount of knowledge of the state language, the procedure for the examination of proficiency in the state language and the state fee for the examination of proficiency in the state language"



See also point 2.1. Study field management, attachment 10, Teaching staff CV  
10\_Curriculum Vitae in English language.zip

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant. See point 2.1. Study field management, Attachment nr. 7 in e-platform

7\_Study agreement on the State budget dotation and on the Physical, legal entity funds.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant.

See point 2.1. Study field management, attachment nr. 5 in e-platform:

COOPERATION CONTRACT Nr.1.-14.1./16, 11 March 2022

2.1.The Parties agree on the following mutual cooperation:

2.1.1. LU RMK undertakes to matriculate the students of RSU SKMK study program "Treatment" with the qualification "Physician Assistant" and "Emergency medicine physician assistant"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant.

See point 2.1. Study field management, Attachment nr. 6 in e-platform

Order NR. 1-8/135, 23.12.2021. in Riga determine:

In that case, Red Cross Medical College of Riga Stradiņš university students in the study programs "Medicine" (41 721), "Therapeutic Massage" (41 722), and "Pharmacy" (41 725) suppose the study program license is not accredited or revoked due to the college's actions (actions or omissions). The student does not wish to continue studies in another study program; compensation for losses will be provided.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study program corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers 24.03.2009. to Regulation No. 268 "Regulations regarding the competence in medical treatment of medical practitioners and students who acquire first or second level professional higher medical education programs, and the amount of theoretical and practical knowledge of these persons".

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

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The study program partially complies with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions where it is applicable and other binding regulatory enactments. This is due to deficiencies in study course descriptions and in particular the outdated recommended literature.

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

Study program "Treatment" complies with all the requirements that are applicable in point 2.5. No significant deficiencies in these requirements are found. Studies are executed in Latvian language and all necessary documents and materials are in Latvian language except latest research and evidence based literature - for that good English knowledge is required.

In this program most of the students are working parallel to studies and it is possible to combine it. College is forthcoming with supporting this and helping out with schedule adaptation if necessary. Learning is executed in both ways - online and face-to-face.

#### **Strengths:**

1. Possibility to combine working and studying, it provides early on site training and adaptation in real life situations and being in contact with experienced colleagues. Mixed studying - online and face-to-face. Advanced simulation environment and virtual laboratories, students were able to study throughout the pandemic. Possibilities to do independent learning in simulation classes.
2. Staff members are motivated to take part in pedagogical skill development which ensures the quality of the educational process.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Insufficient English knowledge among some students and teaching staff.
2. Minor deficiencies in the study course mapping - some positions create confusion with regards to differentiation between knowledge and skills.
3. Some recommended literature is older than 10 years.

The stated shortcomings of the study program are considered insufficient to reduce the overall assessment for the following reasons:

- 1) in case of assessment of language skills, the subjective element of interviews should be taken into account,
- 2) in the case of recommended literature, the dynamics of its renewal should be respected, that is, how regularly new volumes of the literature in question are added and published,
- 3) other mentioned weaknesses are already classified as minor and therefore deserve attention but does not affect the valuation.

In the view of the expert team, the strengths of the given study program outweigh its weaknesses.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Treatment"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

## 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Treatment"

### Short-term recommendations

Revise the study course mapping to include all relevant knowledge in the skills section.

Conduct a careful analysis in the form of a survey of the reasons for dropping out of college.

Revise English language study course content and include additional questions in the student questionnaires dedicated specifically to this topic.

### Long-term recommendations

Pay attention to the creation of a system that would support the publication of peer-reviewed articles.

English lessons should be in sufficient amounts, so that students and lecturers are able to communicate in English and read scientific articles.

Create conditions and a system that will ensure the acquisition of PhDs by more lecturers

Increase English language skills among teachers and students.

Update recommended study course literature.

## II - "Treatment" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Treatment" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. The study programme "Treatment" with the qualification "physician assistant" complies with the study field of "Health care" indicators, conditions and criteria. The length of the implementation of the study program, which is three years, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and practical experience to enter the labor market.

2.1.2. The title of the study programme is "Treatment" in the study field "Health care" with education classification code 41721. The professional qualification given after finishing the studies at the college of the first level professional higher education study program is the "physician assistant". The aim of the programme is to prepare qualified and skilled physician assistants for medical practice who are able to provide medical primary care to all age groups of people. The learning outcomes are based on objectives which include knowledge, skills and competencies which are according to Latvian qualification framework for the 5th qualification level and the requirements included in the professional standard. The results that wish to be achieved are in line with the aim, tasks and qualification of a physician assistant. Admission requirements are all outlined within the homepage of the College. The requirements for the admission of the academic year 2022/23 are available in the SAR page 141. The admission requirements of the study programme is general or

vocational secondary education. It can be stated that all of the indicators are interrelated and effective. As indicated in chapter 2.1.1., the study duration is three years and the language of implementation is Latvian. During the study process, students must acquire 120 credit points. As the professionals are specifically meant to be prepared only for Latvian labor market and for the purpose to prepare specialists who are working in parallel with their studies, gaining practical skills since the first study year, the parameters set are seen as justifiable and reasonable.

2.1.3. According to information provided in SAR page 137, there have been a few corrections made in the study programme parameters within the assessment of the study field. The College has outlined a comparison of them in the SAR outlining a comparison between study years 2012/13 and 2021/22. The main component credit point (CP) division has changed: General education study courses from 20 CP to 21 CP; Branch study courses 66 CP to 65 CP; Internship from 20 CP to 22 CP; Qualifying paper from 10 CP to 8 CP. Only the amount of CP has remained unchanged for Professional Development Course in the amount of 4CP.

A few changes have been made in the study courses as well. For example, the study course “Human Development” has been replaced by a study course “Patient Safety”. It has been done due to a letter received from the Ministry of Health with a recommendation of inclusion of patient safety related topics in the study programme. Also, the section of professional development courses in the study programme “Treatment” was supplemented with the study course “Digital Skills in Health Care”. The amount of CP for the study course “Internal Diseases” has been increased from 12 CP to 15 CP. The study course “Gynecology and Obstetrics” has been reduced from 4 CP to 3 CP.

2.1.4. The study programme is in demand and the specialists after graduating the programme are needed all over the country and specifically in the biggest cities of Latvia. According to the publicly available information, the demand for physician assistants will remain high in the future. According to the information provided in the SAR page 142, regarding the specialists with first level professional higher education, until 2030 the Ministry of Health predicts the increase of the demand to be up to 80%. As mentioned in the report provided by the College that has been made by the Ministry of Health (link provided in the SAR page 142), there is a lack of specialists already in 2022. Table No. 25 in the SAR page 142, provides numbers and analysis of numbers of physician assistants in Latvia and the deficit which amounted to - 312. Overall, in this study programme in 2019/20 69 students were admitted from which 52 graduated. In 2017/2018 the number of students and graduates were lower - 58 admitted and 32 graduated.

The table No. 26, outlines the numbers of graduate employment in the SAR page 143. It shows clearly that there is a very low unemployment number with the lowest percentage of all the colleges in RSU which is a good indicator of unemployment rate being only 1.16%. There is no separate data per qualification.

Dropout rate for this study programme has been rather steady in numbers. In 2018, the dropout rate was 18%, in 2019 - 25% and in 2020 - 16%. The most common reason has been the non-compliance with contracts regarding delays of fulfilling study debts.

2.1.5. N/A

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

All of the indicators of the study programme are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study programme. There are no specific shortcomings indicated. Everything is in compliance with the criteria.

Strengths:

1. High demand for physician assistants in the labor market.
2. Ability for graduates to find a workplace easily and work.

Weaknesses:

None.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The study courses provide the knowledge necessary for the performance of all tasks of professional activity as well as promote personal growth. The study programme complies with the requirements of the State Higher Education standard - the strategic goal, scope, distribution of credit points (mandatory and optional), duration of implementation and implemented study methods. Opportunities to continue studies, appropriate principles of acquisition evaluation and the scope of internship is also provided. The distribution of subjects/topics is in accordance with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the amount of theoretical and practical knowledge of students who acquire the competence of the professional higher medical education program in medical treatment. The mapping of study courses provide extensive information on their compliance with the study results to be achieved (knowledge, skills and competences).

As a positive aspect, the descriptions of the study courses indicate the information about the platform used in the case of the distance learning process. The literature of the study courses includes resources in both Latvian and English, however, some of it is older than 10 years. The specifics of the given discipline (frequency of its publication) must be taken into account in the analysis of the indicated literature.

The description of the content of the study program includes all the most important disciplines of medical care (examination of patients of different ages, evaluation of their state of health, diagnosis of disorders, determination and performance of the necessary treatment; provision of emergency medical care; performing preventive work for patients, their families; assessment of a woman's health condition, diagnosis of pregnancy and its disorders, provision of necessary treatment, childbirth assistance in critical situations; maintenance of a safe working environment; principles of pedagogy in educating patients and the care team; legal bases of professional activity), which correspond to the competencies mentioned in Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 268 (Article 570). In addition to the basic competencies of the profession, the goals of the study program also include modern health care and personal development of students.

The first of the above is implemented by providing students with a modern instrumental and technological base for acquiring skills, while the second is done through motivation for further education - supporting lifelong learning and general pursuit of knowledge, developing active information acquisition methods. The objectives of the study program include the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of the competences mentioned in the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 268 (articles 570 and 571).

Supervision of the implementation of the study program and its quality is ensured by the head of the study program, a specialist of the methodological department, the study program council and the internal quality council. Involvement of several parties ensures its quality and analysis from multiple perspectives.

The content of the study program corresponds to the competencies specified in the Professional Standard (on concept level, level of understanding, and user level). During the interviews, information was obtained on the compliance of the study courses with the requirements of the labor

market. This is ensured by maintaining intensive feedback with representatives of the labor market. The process is implemented through various questionnaires. Representatives of the College have also participated in the development of state-level regulatory documentation in cooperation with other administrative institutions. This type of organizing process allows students to effectively prepare for the actual situation in the labor market.

#### 2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. The studies are organized in the form of theoretical lectures and practical classes; an e-learning platform is also used. During the interviews it was found out that possibilities to use different cell phone applications (Kahoot and others) in conjunction with distance learning platforms (Zoom, Panopto) were used during the period of Covid-19 pandemic. This helped to effectively reduce the idleness of students during the remote lectures.

Student-centered approach is respected by organizing regular surveys for study process quality. Results of aforementioned surveys are analyzed by both the Department of Study Methodology and the teaching staff members. Necessary changes are implemented in a timely manner. Students are also provided with all required information at the start of every study course (distribution of theory and practice, criteria for evaluation, types of tests etc.). Information about changes in the study schedule is provided via email.

Student knowledge is tested with both formative and summative assessment methods. Skills are tested with simulation games (in the form of different role plays). Involvement of the students is also achieved by organizing discussions on different topics. The above mentioned teaching methods ensure the quality of studies both on-site and remotely.

2.2.4. During the interviews it was found out that the internships are organized in close cooperation with the partner institutions and the students have to fulfill all the academic obligations before starting the internship. Before the start of internship, students are instructed about the process and during the internship there is an opportunity to report problems if they develop. Internship documentation includes lists of rights for all involved parties and clearly defined assessment procedure. Along with strictly defined internship type, purpose, tasks and results to be obtained (learning outcomes) this serves as an example of good governance because it leaves out individual interpretation and thus possible conflict situations.

#### 2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. In the process of development of student qualification papers, emphasis is placed on their practical application. The decision on the compliance of the selected topics with the study program is made with the involvement of students, teaching staff, representatives of the College administration and labor market delegates.

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

The content of the study programme is topical and includes the latest tendencies in the labor market.

The implemented study methods contribute to the achievement of the goals and results of the study program.

Student internships are implemented effectively with both timely instructions and provision of necessary equipment and placements.

The topics of student qualification papers are topical and relevant to the study field. Decisions for

these topics are made with the involvement of multiple parties which contributes to the topicality.

Strengths:

1. Detailed mapping of the content of study courses, which corresponds to the individual descriptions.

Weaknesses:

1. Some recommended literature is older than 10 years.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

None.

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

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The infrastructure, informative provision (library resources), financial provision, material and technical equipment fully comply with requirements of the study program "Treatment" (qualification "Physician Assistant") and demonstrate achievements of program learning outcomes. The buildings are equipped with teaching classrooms, spaces for group work, library, and laboratories relevant to the specifics of the program. The College technological equipment, Internet connection, Wi-Fi coverage, etc. are in full compliance with today's College needs as well as with data safety principles. Library resources of the College are considerable, they are focused on informational support and provision of teaching and research activities of the professors, researchers, students of the College. Students and staff have full access to the international electronic library databases. The existing environment at the College is adapted for people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The program "Treatment" (qualification "Physician Assistant") has many modern equipped rooms for the effective conduct of theoretical and practical classes: two anatomy laboratories, laboratory of clinical manipulations, hygiene, laboratory examination, plastering laboratory, procedures laboratory, laboratory for provision of first aid and emergency assistance, clinical skills self-study room for students, laboratory for pregnant women and maternity care, simulation laboratory, CH children care laboratory, clinical skill self-learning room for students, laboratory for clinical manipulations – digestion vacuum packing laboratory, clinical skills audience-multifunctional, simulation meeting room, laboratory for clinical manipulations–surgery, laboratory of clinical manipulations/simulations. Full description of the equipment is given in the Annex, No. 14.

The College has not only common rooms for any of the programs, but training rooms adapted to the program "Treatment" (qualification "Physician Assistant"). Organization and development learning simulation areas in the College have been available since the 2019/2020 academic year. Classrooms are equipped with audio-video techniques for recording classes. Self-study rooms for training practical skills are provided for students. There is a couch, full-body mannequin, injection arm, airway access mulch for intubation, CPR mannequin, equipment for vital signs – tonometer and phonendoscope, urinary tract catheterization of different sexes, etc. Students have free access to these rooms. During the interview, students pointed out that they often use these self-studying rooms, because they are very suitable for preparation for exams.

Students are provided with WI-FI throughout the College. The Panopto video recording system is used to prepare audiovisual teaching materials. There are two computer classes available for the students. The students of the study program "Treatment" (qualification „Physician assistant“) have full access to the books and databases of the RSU Library and the RSU Library Information Center for Latvian health care specialists. The full description of the databases can be found in the Experts Report, Part 1 (the Assessment of a Study Field), chapter 1.3., Resources and Provision of the Study Field. All resources are available to students and teaching staff. This has been confirmed during the interview with the Directors of the Study programs, students and teaching staff.

#### 2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. Total financing for the program ‘Treatment’ (qualification "Physician Assistant) has decreased from 2017: in 2017 – total financing was 450.396.16€, in 2020 – 359.797.06€ (see SAR page 134). The minimum number of students in this study program to ensure profitability of the study program "Treatment" (qualification "Physician Assistant") is 195, but the total number of students in this program is 122. The last admission was in September 2020/2021, and included 60 students. Number of dropout students is 41. Therefore the total number of students at this program is 122 (Program Annexes, No. 2). From the data obtained, it is not evident that the Program has a sufficient number of students to generate profits, as it does not reach the minimum number of students required for profitability. The studying process is almost completely financed by state budget or ESF funding.

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

Programme is provided by necessary infrastructure and technical equipment required for achieving programme learning outcomes. The infrastructure, informative provision (library resources), financial provision, material and technical equipment fully comply with requirements of the study program "Treatment" (qualification "Physician Assistant") and demonstrate achievements of program learning outcomes. From the data obtained, it is not evident that the Program has a sufficient number of students to generate profits, as it does not reach the minimum number of students required for profitability.

#### Strengths:

1. As a whole, students do have a stimulating learning environment with the appropriate equipment, space and possibilities for cooperation and group-working.
2. The College has a student portal – used for attendance, activity, and assessment; through this portal the university community receives up-to-date information and has an opportunity for online, instant feedback.
3. Library has a comfortable studying environment for all students. Library resources are available.

#### Weaknesses:

1. The allocation of financial resources stipulated in the program budget is economically feasible. However, from the data obtained, it is not evident that the Program has a sufficient number of students to generate profits, as it does not reach the minimum number of students required for profitability.

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

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



### **Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The allocation of financial resources stipulated in the program budget is economically feasible. However, from the data obtained, it is not evident that the Program has a sufficient number of students to generate profits, as it does not reach the minimum number of students required for profitability

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The preparation of lecturers complies with the requirements for the implementation of the curriculum and the provisions of normative acts. As a large part of the lecturers also work professionally in the field of health care (as heard in meetings with lecturers), which ensures close cooperation of lecturers with employers and modern professional know-how. However, ensuring the pedagogical competences of part-time lecturers is a concern. The Methodological Department has been established in the College (see SAR pages 13 and 31), which supports both beginning and experienced lecturers in finding the best and most suitable learning and assessment methods (including self-tests in Moodle and Kahoot) in a rapidly changing situation. Lecturers also have the opportunity to learn from each other (collegial observation etc; see SAR page 161) and participate in various (including pedagogical) training at the RSU. Nevertheless, there is no clear system for guiding beginners to teacher training.

2.4.2. The changes in the composition of the teaching staff are related to changes in the content of the study programme (see SAR page 159). New lecturers have the opportunity to participate in the School of Young Lecturers to promote the ability of participants to independently implement innovative initiatives in their study courses.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. As seven lectures with PhD and 3 more applicants involved for a scientific degree (see SAR page 159), the competence to conduct research is available and opportunities for this are also created by College creating grants (see SAR page 80) and directing money to research. Academically elected lecturers in the College have a mandatory participation in methodological and research activities (see SAR page 159). There are enough lecturers with a degree to do successful research and write peer-reviewed articles. The contribution of a senior lecturer in writing books is commendable. Despite the change of teaching staff during the reporting period (there may not have been enough time to contribute to the research), the number of peer-reviewed publications is small. Closer research cooperation with international partners would be advisable. Language learning (English) would be also helpful, which would facilitate, among other things, international co-operation in the field of research, as well as publication in peer-reviewed journals.

2.4.5. Regular monthly meetings between teachers, collegial observations (see SAR page 161), close co-operation with employers (feedback from employers during the interview) ensure close co-operation in the curriculum, including the sharing of teaching methods and experience.

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

The preparation of lecturers complies with the requirements for the implementation of the curriculum and the provisions of normative acts. The changes in the composition of the teaching staff are related to changes in the content of the study programme, training opportunities are provided for new teachers. There is close co-operation between lecturers, as well as cooperation

with employers. The contribution of a senior lecturer in writing books is commendable. Closer research cooperation with international partners would be advisable.

Strengths:

1. Lecturers are professionals in their field.
2. Commendable contribution to writing books.
3. Close and consistent cooperation between lecturers and with employers.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of international research cooperation.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The teaching staff meets the requirements of regulatory acts and the principles of a modern educational institution due to the fact that large number of them are also practitioners in the respective fields which also facilitates close and consistent cooperation with representatives of labor market.

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

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study program fully complies with the Cabinet Regulations No.141 "Regulations on the first level Professional Higher Education State Standard".

See point 3.1. Characteristics of the study program, attachment 3, e-platform

3\_Treatment\_Compliance of the national education standard.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with a valid professional standard, see point 3.1. Characteristics of the study program, attachment 4, e-platform:

4\_Treatment\_Compliance with the profession standard.docx

Profession standard Physician's assistant, developed in 2021. (project)

In January 2022, approved by the Ministry of Health and forwarded for approval to the National Center for Education (NCE).

Available for viewing here (only in the Latvian language):

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TXS4zUnkD-n8xg2xzqCa\\_jbRZ\\_fPD3-S/edit?usp=sharing&oid=105093459643835766014&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TXS4zUnkD-n8xg2xzqCa_jbRZ_fPD3-S/edit?usp=sharing&oid=105093459643835766014&rtpof=true&sd=true)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Studie course descriptions are in line with the requirements set forth in Section 56.(1) , Paragraph two and Section 56.(2) , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. But some of the literature listed is outdated. That is why the requirement is partially compliant. Study program is in Latvian language, and documents have been prepared in Latvian language. Point 3.2. Content and implementation of studies, attachment 7, e-platform  
7\_Ārstniecība\_Studiju kursu apraksti.zip

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Diploma issued complies with Regulation of Minister Cabinet Nr. 202, according to which state recognized documents of higher education are issued.  
Point 2.2. attachment nr 2.  
See sample added in point 3.2.Content and implementation of studies: attachment 1  
1\_Treatment diploma and diploma supplement.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

See point 2.1. Study field management, attachment nr. 11 in e-platform:  
11\_Confirmation of the adequacy of the academic staff's knowledge of the state language.jpg  
No. 1-11/7, Riga. Director of Red Cross medical College certifies with her signature that the

knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study program "Treatment" corresponds to 2009 of 7 July 733 "Regulations regarding the amount of knowledge of the state language, the procedure for the examination of proficiency in the state language and the state fee for the examination of proficiency in the state language" Point 2.1. Study field management, Attachment 10, Teaching staff CV  
10\_Curriculum Vitae in English language.zip

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

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

See point 2.1. Study field management, attachment nr. 7 in e-platform:

7\_Study agreement on the State budget dotation and on the Physical, legal entity funds.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant.

See point 2.1. Study field management, Attachment nr. 5 in e-platform:

COOPERATION CONTRACT Nr.1.-14.1./16

11 March 2022

2.1. The Parties agree on the following mutual cooperation:

2.1.1. LU RMK undertakes to matriculate the students of RSU SKMK study program "Treatment" with the qualification "Physician Assistant" and "Emergency medicine physician assistant"

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant.

See point 2.1. Study field management, Attachment nr. 6 in e-platform

Order NR. 1-8/135, 23.12.2021. in Riga determine:

In that case, Red Cross Medical College of Riga Stradiņš university students in the study programs "Medicine" (41 721), "Therapeutic Massage" (41 722), and "Pharmacy" (41 725)

suppose the study program license is not accredited or revoked due to the college's actions

(actions or omissions). The student does not wish to continue studies in another study program; compensation for losses will be provided.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study program corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers 24.03.2009. to Regulation No. 268 "Regulations regarding the competence in medical treatment of medical practitioners and students who acquire first or second level professional higher medical education programs, and the amount of theoretical and practical knowledge of these persons.

See point 3.1. Characteristics of the study program, attachment 4.2, e-platform:

4.2. The study program "Treatment" complies with the specific regulatory framework of the respective field.docx

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The study program partially complies with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions where it is applicable and other binding regulatory enactments. This is due to deficiencies in study course descriptions and in particular the outdated recommended literature.

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

Study program "Treatment" complies with all the requirements that are applicable. No significant deficiencies in these requirements are found. Studies are executed in Latvian language and all necessary documents and materials are in Latvian language except latest research and evidence based literature - for that good English knowledge is required. In this program most of the students are working parallel to studies and it is possible to combine it. College is forthcoming with supporting this and helping out with schedule adaptation if necessary. Learning is executed in both ways - online and face-to-face.

**Strengths:**

1. Possibility to combine working and studying, it provides an early on site training and adaptation in real life situations and being in contact with experienced colleagues. Mixed studying - online and face-to-face. Advanced simulation environment and virtual laboratories, students were able to study throughout the pandemic. Possibilities to do independent learning in simulation classes.
2. Staff members are motivated to take part in pedagogical skill development which ensures the quality of the educational process.

**Weaknesses:**

1. Insufficient English knowledge among some students and teaching staff.
2. Some recommended literature is older than 10 years.

The stated shortcomings of the study program are considered insufficient to reduce the overall assessment for the following reasons:

- 1) in case of assessment of language skills, the subjective element of interviews should be taken into account,

2) in the case of recommended literature, the dynamics of its renewal should be respected, that is, how regularly new volumes of the literature in question are added and published.  
In the view of the expert team, the strengths of the given study program outweigh its weaknesses.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Treatment"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Treatment"**

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

Make sure that practical skill assessments of students are done effectively and also in the form of an objectively structured clinical examination (OSCE).

The allocation of financial resources stipulated in the program budget is economically feasible. However, from the data obtained, it is not evident that the Program has a sufficient number of students to generate profits, as it does not reach the minimum number of students required for profitability.

More accuracy needed for the program budget, more detailed description.

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

Pay more attention to international research cooperation.

To add extra English lessons for sufficient communication and research article reading/understanding/interpreting.

Update recommended study course literature.

## **II - "Therapeutic Massage " ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Therapeutic Massage " ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

2.1.1. The study programme "Therapeutic massage" with the qualification "massage therapist" complies with the study field of "Health care" indicators, conditions and criteria. The length of the implementation of the study program, which is two years, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and practical experience to enter the labor market. It is a joint programme that is implemented in collaboration with the RSU Liepaja branch.

2.1.2. The title of the study programme is "Therapeutic massage" in the study field "Health care" with education classification code 41722. The professional qualification given after finishing the studies at the College of the first level professional higher education study program is the "massage therapist". The aim of the programme is to prepare qualified and competitive masseurs – medical persons, promoting professional growth of the students and developing the necessary competencies for the labor market. The tasks of the study programme are designed according to the standard of the masseur profession and is available here:

<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-149.pdf> and also in the SAR page 169. The learning outcomes are based on objectives which include knowledge, skills and competencies which are according to Latvian qualification framework for the 5th qualification level and the requirements included in the professional standard. The results that wish to be achieved are in line with the aim, tasks and qualification of a massage therapist. Admission requirements are all outlined within the homepage of the College and also the link to the admission requirements is provided in the SAR page 172. The requirements for the admission for this programme is general or vocational secondary education. It can be stated that all of the indicators are interrelated and effective. As indicated in chapter 2.1.1., the study duration is two years and the language of implementation is Latvian. During the study process, students must acquire 80 credit points. As the professionals are specifically meant to be prepared only for Latvian labor market and for the purpose to prepare specialists who are working in parallel with their studies, gaining practical skills since the first study year, the parameters set are seen as justifiable and reasonable.

2.1.3. According to information provided in SAR page 137, there have been a few corrections made in the study programme parameters within the assessment of the study field. The College has outlined a comparison of them in the SAR outlining a comparison between study years 2015/16 and 2021/22. The main component credit point (CP) division has remained the same: General education study courses ( 20 CP); Branch study courses (36 CP); Internship (16 CP); Qualifying paper (8 CP). First change made was in the Business Module that has now been distributed between the first and second study years. In the first year there is a study course "Record Keeping and Information Literacy" (2 CP) and in the second year "Basics of Economics and Entrepreneurship", "Accounting", "Project Preparation and Management"" study courses (4 CP). Beforehand, it was all taught in one year for 6 CP. "Medical rehabilitation" course (2 CP) was first thought to be implemented in the first year but ended up being implemented in the second study year. The study course "Labor Protection and Ergonomics" is now implemented in the first study year in order to be taught before "Classical Massage" course where the basic knowledge of ergonomics is needed. The order of study courses "Propaedeutics" and "Pedagogy" has been changed because of better succession of courses. Due to suggestions by employers and students, 2021/22 In the academic year, it is planned to implement the study course "Massage for various diseases", which was not in the initial plan of the program. In the initial plan of the programme. This course was replaced by the study course "Maternity Massage".

2.1.4. The study programme is in demand and the specialists after graduating the programme are needed all over the country and specifically in the biggest cities of Latvia. What is peculiar about the field of massage therapists is that the profession has gone through significant formational changes in the last years not only in Latvia but all through Europe. In 2012, changes were outlined within the Medical Treatment Law which stated that massage therapists require first level higher education to work. It is the key element of the demand of this programme as for anyone who desires to work in this profession, it is mandatory to have a specific educational background. According to the information provided in SAR page 172, there are around 10 rehabilitation centers in Latvia which are the main employers of the massage therapists except for individual practitioners. The employers have stated that in every year there is a need of approximately 15 graduates per year. Table No. 47 in the SAR page 174, outlines the numbers of graduate employment rate. It shows clearly that there is a very low unemployment number with the lowest percentage of all the colleges in RSU which is a good indicator of unemployment rate being only 1.16%. There is no separate data per qualification. Overall, there has been an increase of students in the last few years. In 2018/19, there were 70 students who were studying from private funding and 8 had budget places, while in 2019/20 - 83 students with private funding and 10 having state budget places. Dropout rate for this study programme has been low and has decreased over the years which is a

very good indicator. In 2018, the dropout rate was 12%, in 2019 – 12% and in 2020 – 8%. The most common reason has been the non-compliance with contracts regarding delays of fulfilling study debts. The dropout rate in 2021 has mostly been related to COVID-19 pandemic and various issues related to the situation in the country. Importantly, most of the students of this programme study from their own resources which also may influence the willingness to complete their studies if they have invested their own financial means.

2.1.5. College has established a joint programme together with the RSU Liepaja branch. For the purpose of successful implementation, development and realization of the programme, Joint Study Program Council was made. The Council overlooks the activities, ensures that all the processes within the study programme are overlooked. Each of the parties are responsible for registering the students, issuing the diploma, and awarding professional qualification. Both of the parties act independently but cooperate when needed for such purposes as setting requirements of the study programme, agreeing on the dates of final exams. There is also an agreement on the development and implementation of this study programme that is available in the SAR page 176. The Joint Study Program Council is responsible for taking care of changes in the plan of study courses or study programmes, changes in study papers or forms of examinations. During onsite visits, students had only positive feedback regarding this study programme and its quality. Thus, the development and implementation of the joint study programme is seen as justified and ensures a quality study process.

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

All of the indicators of the study programme are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study programme. There are no specific shortcomings indicated. Everything is in compliance with the criteria.

Strengths:

1. Demand for massage therapists in the labor market.
2. Ability for graduates to find a workplace.
3. Providing the study programme for students in Rīga and Liepaja as it is a joint programme.
4. Low dropout rates.

Weaknesses:

None.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The study courses provide the knowledge necessary for the performance of all tasks of professional activity as well as promote personal growth. The study programme complies with the requirements of the State Higher Education standard - the strategic goal, scope, distribution of credit points (mandatory and optional), duration of implementation and implemented study methods. Opportunities to continue studies, appropriate principles of acquisition evaluation and the scope of internship is also provided. The distribution of subjects/topics is in accordance with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the amount of theoretical and practical knowledge of students who acquire the competence of the professional higher medical education program in medical treatment. Besides the aforementioned the program also complies with Civil Defense and Disaster management Law.

The mapping of study courses provides extensive information on their compliance with the study



results to be achieved (knowledge, skills and competences).

The descriptions of the study courses indicate the information about the platform used in the case of the distance learning process. The literature of the study courses includes resources in both Latvian and English, however, some of it is older than 10 years. The specifics of the given discipline (frequency of its publication) must be taken into account in the analysis of the indicated literature.

The description of the content of the study program includes all the most important disciplines of the field (teamwork, biopsychosocial model of human functioning, basic principles of rehabilitation; maintenance of a safe working environment, arrangement and organization of the working environment; assessment of patients' health status; principles of massage procedures in treatment, rehabilitation and prevention; different types of massage; peculiarities of massage procedures in massage of separate zones; professional communication and cooperation with patients and other medical personnel; understanding and using the regularities of physiotherapy; correction of pathological muscle stereotype with self-mobilization and training of hypotonic muscle groups; basics of medical gymnastics in cases of various diseases; ergonomics; understanding and using the basics of business and record keeping and legal bases of professional activity among others), which correspond to the competencies mentioned in Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 268 (article 583).

In addition to the basic competencies of the profession, the goals of the study program also include modern health care and personal development of students.

The first of the above is implemented by providing students with a modern instrumental and technological base for acquiring skills, while the second is done through motivation for further education - supporting lifelong learning and general pursuit of knowledge, developing active information acquisition methods.

The objectives of the study program include the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of the competences mentioned in the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 268 (articles 582 and 583).

Supervision of the implementation of the study program and its quality is ensured by the head of the study program, a specialist of the methodological department, the study program council and the internal quality council. Involvement of several parties ensures its quality and analysis from multiple perspectives.

The content of the study program corresponds to the competencies specified in the Professional Standard (on concept level, level of understanding, and user level). During the interviews, information was obtained on the compliance of the study courses with the requirements of the labor market. This is ensured by maintaining intensive feedback with representatives of the labor market. The process is implemented through various questionnaires.

Representatives of the College have also participated in the development of state-level regulatory documentation in cooperation with other administrative institutions. This type of organizing of the study process allows students to effectively prepare for the actual situation in the labor market.

#### 2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. The mapping of study courses provides extensive information on their compliance with the study results to be achieved (knowledge, skills and competences). As a positive aspect, the descriptions of the study courses indicate the information about the platform used in the case of the distance learning process.

The studies are organized in the form of theoretical lectures and practical classes; e-learning platforms (Zoom, Loom, Panopto) are also used.

Student-centered approach is respected by organizing regular surveys for study process quality. Results of aforementioned surveys are analyzed by both the Department of Study Methodology and the teaching staff members. Necessary changes are implemented in a timely

manner. Students are also provided with all required information at the start of every study course (distribution of theory and practice, criteria for evaluation, types of tests etc.). Information about changes in the study schedule is provided via email.

Student knowledge is tested with both formative and summative assessment methods. Skills are tested with simulation games (in the form of different role plays). Involvement of the students is also achieved by organizing discussions on different topics. Part of the study process is also dedicated to individual work with The above mentioned teaching methods ensure the quality of studies both on-site and remotely.

In the context of joint program management, uniform requirements are developed for the implementation of it in both institutions in terms of final examinations, award of degrees and professional qualifications. There is also a Joint Council of the study program which is involved in the assessment of the performance indicators, reviews and self-assessment process. Study course titles and credit points that are developed together and approved at the Joint Council of the study program are the same.

The implementation of the content of the study program is supervised by the Joint Council of the study program, while the organizational and administrative part is left to each party separately in accordance with the regulatory documents. This way there is an acceptable level of balance of both autonomy and subordination of involved institutions.

The literature of the study courses includes resources in both Latvian and English, however, some literature is older than 10 years. The specifics of the given discipline (frequency of its publication) must be taken into account in the analysis of the indicated literature.

Student-centered approach is realized by conducting regular questionnaires on various topics regarding the study process. Objective necessary changes are implemented as soon as possible.

2.2.4. During the interviews it was found out that the internships are organized in close cooperation with the partner institutions and the students have to fulfill all the academic obligations before starting the internship. Before the start of internship, students are instructed about the process and during the internship there is an opportunity to report problems if they develop. Internship documentation includes lists of rights for all involved parties and clearly defined assessment procedure. Along with strictly defined internship type, purpose, tasks and results to be obtained (learning outcomes) this serves as an example of good governance because it leaves out individual interpretation and thus possible conflict situations.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. In the process of development of student qualification papers, emphasis is placed on their practical application. The decision on the compliance of the selected topics with the study program is made with the involvement of students, teaching staff, representatives of the College administration and labor market delegates. This ensures that qualification paper topics are relevant to the study field.

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

The content of the study programme is topical and it respects latest tendencies in the labor market. The implemented study methods contribute to the achievement of the goals and results of the study program.

Student internships are implemented effectively with both timely instructions and provision of necessary equipment and placements.

The topics of student qualification papers are topical and relevant to the study field. Decisions for

these topics are made with the involvement of multiple parties which contributes to the topicality.

Strengths:

1. Detailed mapping of the content of study courses, which corresponds to the individual descriptions.

Weaknesses:

1. Deficiencies in English skills among staff members and students.
2. Some recommended literature is older than 10 years.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

None.

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

#### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The Program has command of necessary infrastructure and technical equipment required for achieving learning outcomes. Classrooms are well-equipped for theoretical and practical studies. Simulation center was created to develop students' practical field skills. The library resources are made available for students and staff. Various international electronic scientific databases are available to staff and students. The condition and functionality of the IT equipment is satisfactory. Besides, an electronic teaching method is used, supported by the electronic Moodle portal. All resources are available to students and teaching staff. This has been confirmed during the interview with the Directors of the study programs, students and teaching staff. Full description of the equipment is given in the Annex, No. 14.

From September 2020 on a new practical room for therapeutic massage was opened in the College. This room is equipped with 11 modern massage couches. There is additional necessary equipment for massage training – 5 multifunctional trolleys, towels, disposable blankets. A separate training laboratory with built-in furniture and a sanitary unit has been set up for practical massage classes.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. Analysis of the dynamics of the number of students shows a significant growth number of students from 2015 till 2020 academic years (Program Annexes, No. 3). The studying process is almost completely based on private financing, 15 students from the complete submission in 2021 are provided state budget places. The minimum number of students in this study program to ensure profitability of the study program is 36 for College and 12 for RSU Liepaja branch. Total number of students at the study program is 84 (private financing places) and 10 (state budget places) in the College and 42 (private financing places) and 6 (state budget places) in the RSU Liepaja branch. Number of dropout students is respectively 15 and 1 (Program Annexes, No. 3). It is evident that the program has sufficient students to generate sufficient income and can support the development of the study program.

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

The Program has command of necessary infrastructure and technical equipment required for achieving learning outcomes. Classrooms are well-equipped for theoretical and practical studies. Simulation center was created to develop students' practical field skills. All resources are available to students and teaching staff. It is evident that the program has sufficient students to generate sufficient income and can support the development of the study program.

**Strengths:**

1. The College possesses all infrastructure necessary to run the curriculum, the teaching equipment among others it has well equipped massage classrooms.
2. As a whole, students do have a stimulating learning environment with the appropriate equipment, space and possibilities for cooperation and group-working.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The Program has command of necessary infrastructure and technical equipment required for achieving learning outcomes.

**2.4. Teaching Staff**

**Analysis**

2.4.1. The preparation of lecturers complies with the requirements for the implementation of the curriculum and the provisions of normative acts. As a large part of the lecturers also work professionally in the field of health care (as heard in meetings with teachers), which ensures close cooperation of lecturers with employers and modern professional know-how. However, ensuring the pedagogical competences of part-time lecturers is a concern. The Methodological Department has been established in the College (see SAR pages 13 and 31), which supports both beginning and experienced lecturers in finding the best and most suitable learning and assessment methods (including self-tests in Moodle and Kahoot) in a rapidly changing situation. Lecturers also have the opportunity to learn from each other (collegial observation etc.; see SAR page 195) and participate in various (including pedagogical) training at the RSU. Nevertheless, there is no clear system for guiding beginners to teacher training.

2.4.2. The changes in the composition of the teaching staff from 2016–2021 is related, among other things, to the retirement of teachers (see SAR page 193). The teaching staff regularly improves their qualification by participating in professional development events, conferences and publishing articles in academic publications (see SAR page 194).

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. As three lectures with PhD (see SAR page 190), the competence to conduct research is available and opportunities for this are also created by College creating grants (see SAR page 80) and directing money to research. There are enough lecturers with a degree to do preliminary

research and write peer-reviewed articles; but it would be important to direct more teachers to obtain a PhD. The lecturers have repeatedly carried out successful applied research projects with students (for example, "Effect of Classical Massage on Muscle Function" (see SAR page 194). Unfortunately, only few lecturers in Therapeutic Massage curriculum have published in peer-reviewed journals in recent years (see annex No. 13) and thus the achievement of the goal (publication in a peer-reviewed journal for six years) is questionable. Due to the change of teaching staff in recent years, there may have been little time to focus on research and publication. Many lecturers also work professionally more than the last 5 years (for example in a clinical environment). The necessity and importance of maintaining professional practical experience in addition to teaching work was pointed out by the lecturers themselves as well as students and alumni. Closer research cooperation with international partners would be advisable. Language learning (English) would be also helpful, which would facilitate, among other things, international co-operation in the field of research, as well as publication in peer-reviewed journals.

2.4.5. Regular monthly meetings between teachers, collegial observations (see SAR page 195), close co-operation with employers (feedback from employers during the interview) ensure close co-operation in the curriculum, including the sharing of teaching methods and experience.

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

The preparation of lecturers complies with the requirements for the implementation of the curriculum and the provisions of normative acts. Lecturers have the opportunity to learn from each other and participate in various training at the RSU. The teaching staff regularly improves their qualification by participating in professional development events, conferences and publishing articles in academic publications. In addition to the co-operation between teachers, there is also close co-operation with employers. In order to better organize research, it would be important to direct more lecturers to PhD studies.

Strengths:

1. Lecturers are professionals in their field.
2. Close and consistent cooperation between teachers and with employers.
3. The lecturers of the curriculum are successful in the field of research.

Weaknesses:

None.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The teaching staff meets the requirements of regulatory acts and the principles of a modern educational institution due to the fact that large number of them are also practitioners in the respective fields which also facilitates close and consistent cooperation with representatives of labor market.

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

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study program fully complies with the Cabinet Regulations No.141 "Regulations on the first level Professional Higher Education State Standard".

See point 3.2. Content and implementation of studies, attachment 4, e-platform.

4\_Therapeutic Massage\_Compliance to the State Education Standard.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study program complies with a valid professional standard.

Renewed professional standard agreed at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Council for Vocational Education and Employment on 10 February 2021, has been implemented in the program.

PS-149.pdf (visc.gov.lv)

5\_Therapeutic Massage\_Compliance to the Profession Standard.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Study course descriptions are in line with the requirements set forth in Section 56.(1) , Paragraph two and Section 56.(2) , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. But some of the literature listed is outdated. That is why the requirement is partially compliant. Study program is in Latvian language, and documents have been prepared in Latvian language.

See e-platform, 2.3. Resources and provision of the study field, attachment 11:

11\_Confirmation of the adequacy of the academic staff's knowledge of the state language.jpg

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Point 3.1. Parameters characterizing the study program, attachment 1, e-platform

1\_Therapeutic massage\_diploma and diploma supplement.pdf

Diploma issued does not comply with Cabinet of Ministers No. 202. Diploma supplement does not include all necessary information.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

See point 2.1. Study field management, attachment nr. 11 in e-platform:

11\_Confirmation of the adequacy of the academic staff's knowledge of the state language.jpg

No. 1-11/7, Riga. Director of Red Cross medical College certifies with her signature that the

knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the

study program "Massage Therapy" corresponds to 2009 of 7 July 733 "Regulations regarding the amount of knowledge of the state language, the procedure for the examination of proficiency in the state language and the state fee for the examination of proficiency in the state language"

See also point 2.1. Study field management, Attachment 10, Teaching staff CV

10\_Curriculum Vitae in English language.zip

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant. See point 2.1. Study field management, attachment nr. 7 in e-platform:

7\_Study agreement on the State budget dotationand on the Physical, legal entity funds.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant.

Agreement between RSU Liepāja branch and RSU Red Cross Medical College 2015., 27 February.

Point 2.1. Study field management, attachment 5, e-plattform, agreement in Latvian language:

5\_Vienošanās par studiju turpināšanu citās izglītības iestādēs.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant.

See point 2.1. Study field management, attachment nr. 6 in e-plattform:

Order NR. 1-8/135, 23.12.2021. in Riga determine:

In that case, Red Cross Medical College of Riga Stradiņš university students in the study programs "Medicine" (41 721), "Therapeutic Massage" (41 722), and "Pharmacy" (41 725) suppose the study program license is not accredited or revoked due to the college's actions (actions or omissions). The student does not wish to continue studies in another study program; compensation for losses will be provided.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions

See point 3.1. Parameters characterizing the study program, attachment 2, e-plattform:  
2\_Therapeutic massage\_ Principles of Organizing the Joint Study Programme.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study program corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers 24.03.2009. to Regulation No. 268 "Regulations regarding the competence in medical treatment of medical practitioners and students who acquire first or second level professional higher medical education programs, and the amount of theoretical and practical knowledge of these persons.

See point 3.2. Content and implementation of studies, attachment 5.1.

5.1.\_The study program "Therapeutic Massage" complies with the specific regulatory framework of the respective field.docx

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The study program partially complies with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions where it is applicable and other binding regulatory enactments. This is due to deficiencies in study course descriptions and diploma supplements.

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



Study program "Massage Therapist" complies with all the requirements that are applicable. No deficiencies in these requirements are found. Program has been adapted to the latest profession standard. Studies are executed in Latvian language and all necessary documents and materials are in Latvian language except latest research and evidence based literature - for that good English knowledge is required. Learning is executed in both ways - online and face-to-face. Students are involved in research projects, also international.

**Strengths:**

1. Involvement of students in research and international projects. Improved facilities for practical classes. Adaptation to the newest profession standard also in branches. Good management between branches.
2. Staff members are motivated to take part in pedagogical skill development which ensures the quality of the educational process.

**Weaknesses:**

1. Insufficient English knowledge among some students and teaching staff. This is more impactful due to the fact that it was acknowledged by multiple participants during the interviews.
2. Some recommended literature is older than 10 years

The stated shortcomings of the study program are considered insufficient to reduce the overall assessment for the following reasons:

- 1) in case of assessment of language skills, the subjective element of interviews should be taken into account,
- 2) in the case of recommended literature, the dynamics of its renewal should be respected, that is, how regularly new volumes of the literature in question are added and published.

In the view of the expert team, the strengths of the given study program outweigh its weaknesses.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Therapeutic Massage "**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

## **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Therapeutic Massage "**

### **Short-term recommendations**

Revise English language study course content and include additional questions in the student questionnaires dedicated specifically to this topic.
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Clarify the aspect of information contained in the diploma in regards to the joint program.
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### **Long-term recommendations**

Create conditions and a system that will ensure the acquisition of PhDs by more lecturers.
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Increase English language skills among teachers and students.
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Update recommended study course literature.
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## **II - "Pharmaceuticals" ASSESSMENT**

## II - "Pharmaceuticals" ASSESSMENT

### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

#### Analysis

2.1.1. The study programme "Pharmaceuticals" with the qualification "pharmacist assistant" complies with the study field of "Health care" indicators, conditions and criteria. The length of the implementation of the study program, which is two years and six months, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and practical experience to enter the labor market.

2.1.2. The title of the study programme is "Pharmaceuticals" in the study field "Health care" with education classification code 41725. The professional qualification given after finishing the studies at the College of the first level professional higher education study program is the "pharmacist assistant". The aim of the programme is to prepare highly qualified and competitive healthcare professionals that are in demand in Latvian labor market. The aim follows from the 5th level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), where knowledge skills and competencies are formulated according to the 5th LQF, which corresponds to the 1st professional higher education level. The study program "Pharmaceuticals" was developed based on the standards of the profession of Pharmacist's Assistant, which is available here: <https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0369.pdf> and also in the SAR page 202. The learning outcomes are based on objectives which include knowledge, skills and competencies which are according to Latvian qualification framework for the 5th qualification level and the requirements included in the professional standard. The results that wish to be achieved are in line with the aim, tasks and qualification of a pharmacist assistant. Admission requirements are all outlined within the homepage of the College and also the link to the admission requirements is provided in the SAR page 207. The requirements for the admission for this programme is general or vocational secondary education. It can be stated that all of the indicators are interrelated and effective. As indicated in 2.1.11., the study duration is two years and six months and the language of implementation is Latvian. During the study process, students must acquire 100 credit points. As the professionals are specifically meant to be prepared only for Latvian labor market and for the purpose to prepare specialists who are working in parallel with their studies, gaining practical skills since the first study year, the parameters set are seen as justifiable and reasonable.

2.1.3. According to information provided in SAR page 201, there have been a few corrections made in the study programme parameters within the assessment of the study field. The College has outlined a comparison of them in the SAR outlining a comparison between study years 2016/17 and 2021/22. The main component credit point (CP) division has mainly remained the same with minor changes: General education study courses (20 CP); Branch study courses have changed from 57 CP to 56 CP; Internship (16 CP); Qualifying paper (8 CP).

New changes made in the study courses were implemented in between the accreditation terms. "Nutritional Supplements" or "Chemistry and Cosmetics" have been moved from third year electives to second year electives. "Hospital Pharmacy" or "Basics of Veterinary Pharmacy" are now offered as electives in the third study year as electives while in the past they were offered in second year. In 2016/17. the implementation plan did not include "Civil Protection". Civil protection was introduced as a study course in the curriculum in 2018/2019. It is realized in the amount of 1 CP. As a result, the study course "Practical Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Legislation" 2021/22 is in the amount of 3 CP, although in 2016./2017 the study course was in the amount of 4 CP.

2.1.4. The study programme is in demand and the specialists after graduating the programme are needed in the industry of Latvian labor market. The overall number of demand is balanced and stays

the same through the years but there is a tendency identified that the pharmacist assistants are aging with every year. Table No. 57 in the SAR page 208, provides information on numbers and analysis regarding the ratio between the age and number of pharmacist assistants per the age group. The data shows that the smallest number of pharmacist assistants are in the age group of up to 25 while the largest number is in the age group of 51 to 60 years. It indicates that more new pharmacist assistants are desired in order to replace later on the ones that are soon to retire. Table No. 58 in the SAR page 209, outlines the numbers of graduate employment rate. It shows clearly that there is a very low unemployment number with the lowest percentage of all the colleges in RSU which is a good indicator of unemployment rate being only 1.16%. There is no separate data per qualification.

For this study programme the number of students have changed and varies per study year. In 2016/17 there were no state budget places for the study programme and all 28 admitted students covered their studies from private funding. In 2017/18, there were 29 private funding students and 8 state budget places. In 2018/19, the programme had the biggest number of students admitted - 47 private funded and 5 state funded. In 2019/20 31 private funded and 5 state funded.

Dropout rate for this study programme has been slightly increasing over the last years by around 2-3%. In 2018, the dropout rate was 11%, in 2019 - 13% and in 2020 - 16%. The most common reason has been the non-compliance with contracts regarding delays of fulfilling study debts. The dropout rate in 2021 has mostly been related to COVID-19 pandemic and various issues related to the situation in the country. Overall, the number of graduates per study year is increasing. In the study year 2018/19 there were 18 graduates while the following year there were 34. In this study program students cover financial tuition fees by their own resources. During an onsite visit, an expert group found out that pharmacies offer for almost every second student the opportunity to study and they cover the study fee which has been a great motivator to study for the students and get the education.

2.1.5. N/A

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

All of the indicators of the study programme are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study programme. There are no specific shortcomings indicated. Everything is in compliance with the criteria.

Strengths:

1. Demand for pharmacist assistants in the labor market.
2. Ability for graduates to find a workplace.

Weaknesses:

1. Increase in dropout rate numbers.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The study courses provide the knowledge necessary for the performance of all tasks of professional activity as well as promote personal growth. The study programme complies with the requirements of the State Higher Education standard - the strategic goal, scope, distribution of credit points (mandatory and optional), duration of implementation and implemented study methods. Opportunities to continue studies, appropriate principles of acquisition evaluation and the scope of internship are also provided.

The mapping of study courses provides extensive information on their compliance with the study results to be achieved (knowledge, skills and competences).

The summary of knowledge, skills and competences indicated in the study course map is correct, as it fully includes the content of the profession standard (at the level of concept, usage and understanding). Below are given examples of:

- Concept level:

"The general legal framework" corresponds to the Competencies section position No. 8. (Pharmacist assistant operates in accordance with the Pharmacist's Code of Ethics, observing regulatory enactments in the field of pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical information, the Pharmacopeia and personal data protection).

"Drug compounding the framework of good manufacturing practices of medicinal products" corresponds to position No. 6 of the Knowledge section (Knows the basic principles of drug manufacturing and production within the framework of good drug manufacturing practices) and position No. 14 of the Competencies section (Is able to comply with requirements of good drug distribution and manufacturing practices and perform delegated tasks in drug manufacturing or pharmacy).

"The basic principles of economic activity of pharmaceutical companies" correspond to position No. 8 of Knowledge section (Knows the basic principles of economic activity of pharmaceutical companies), position No. 6 of Skills section (Uses the basic principles of marketing and accounting in the work of the company) and position No. 15 of Competencies section (Is able to apply business principles in a pharmaceutical company).

- Level of understanding:

"Basics of microbiology" corresponds to the Competencies section position No. 16 (Is able to comply with labor and environmental protection requirements, use individual and collective protective equipment, apply civil defense principles and provide first aid).

"The structure of the human body, the main organ systems, their functions and interrelationship" correspond to the position No. 3 of the Knowledge section (Knows the principles of the chemical structure of drugs, methods of analysis and their relationship with the functions of a living organism and their use in pharmacy, as well as the regularities of the action of medicinal substances in the body).

"The life processes in a healthy organism" correspond to the position No. 3 of the Knowledge section (Knows the principles of the chemical structure of drugs, methods of analysis and their relationship with the functions of a living organism and their use in pharmacy, as well as the regularities of the action of medicinal substances in the body).

- Usage level:

"The national language competency" corresponds to the 5th Skills section position (Is able to communicate in the national language and at least two foreign languages, works with professional terminology and information).

"At least two foreign languages at a communicative level" correspond to Skills section position No. 5 (Is able to communicate in the national language and at least two foreign languages, works with professional terminology and information).

"Ethics in pharmacist assistant practice" corresponds to the Skills section position No. 10 (Applies the basic principles of legal norms, ethics, patient rights and data security when participating in the process of delivering pharmaceutical care) and the Competencies section position No. 8 (Operates in accordance with the Pharmacist's Code of Ethics, observing regulatory enactments in the field of pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical information, the Pharmacopeia and personal data protection).

The descriptions of the study courses indicate the information about the platform used in the case of the distance learning process. The literature of the study courses includes resources in both Latvian and English, however, some of it is older than 10 years. The specifics of the given discipline (frequency of its publication) must be taken into account in the analysis of the indicated literature.

In addition to the basic competencies of the profession, the goals of the study program also include modern health care and personal development of students. This is done by providing students with a modern instrumental and technological base for acquiring skills and motivating them for further education - supporting lifelong learning and general pursuit of knowledge, developing active information acquisition methods.

Supervision of the implementation of the study program and its quality is ensured by the head of the study program, a specialist of the methodological department, the study program council and the internal quality council. Involvement of several parties ensures its quality and analysis from multiple perspectives.

The content of the study program corresponds to the competencies specified in the Professional Standard (on concept level, level of understanding, and user level). During the interviews, information was obtained on the compliance of the study courses with the requirements of the labor market. This is ensured by maintaining intensive feedback with representatives of the labor market. The process is implemented through various questionnaires.

Representatives of the College have also participated in the development of state-level regulatory documentation in cooperation with other administrative institutions. This type of organizing of the study process allows students to effectively prepare for the actual situation in the labor market.

#### 2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. The studies are organized in the form of theoretical lectures and practical classes; e-learning platforms (Zoom) are also used.

Student-centered approach is respected by organizing regular surveys for study process quality.

Results of aforementioned surveys are analyzed by both the Department of Study Methodology and the teaching staff members. Necessary changes are implemented in a timely manner. Students are also provided with all required information at the start of every study course (distribution of theory and practice, criteria for evaluation, types of tests etc.). Information about changes in the study schedule is provided via email.

Student knowledge is tested with both formative and summative assessment methods. Skills are tested with simulation games (in the form of different role plays). Involvement of the students is also achieved by organizing discussions on different topics. Part of the study process is dedicated to individual work. The above mentioned teaching methods ensure the quality of studies both on-site and remotely.

2.2.4. During the interviews it was found out that the internships are organized in close cooperation with the partner institutions (pharmacy chains). This way internship placements are effectively provided for all students on time and it also leaves out a potentially frustrating experience when multiple refusals are received. The students have to fulfill all the academic obligations before starting the internship. Before the start of internship students are instructed about the process. There is an opportunity to report any problems if they develop. Internship documentation includes lists of rights for all involved parties and a clearly defined assessment procedure. Along with strictly defined internship type, purpose, tasks and results to be obtained (learning outcomes) this serves as an example of good governance because it leaves out individual interpretation and thus possible conflict situations.

#### 2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. In the process of development of student qualification papers, emphasis is placed on their practical application. The decision on the compliance of the selected topics with the study program

is made with the involvement of students, teaching staff, representatives of the College administration and labor market delegates. This ensures that qualification paper topics are relevant to the study field.

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

In conclusion the study courses provide the knowledge necessary for the performance of all tasks of professional activity and promote personal development of the students. Regular informational feedback on the organizing and studying processes is kept up by doing regular surveys on all levels of the involved parties. The study program offers quality internship opportunities to the students and it is thoroughly involved in the scientific research particularly in the social aspects of pharmaceutical care.

Strengths:

1. Detailed mapping of the content of study courses, which corresponds to the individual descriptions.

Weaknesses:

1. Study program should include at least partial study courses related to teamwork and leadership as these aspects have proven to be important in the context of the recent worldwide pandemic.
2. Some recommended literature is older than 10 years.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

None.

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

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The College possesses a full infrastructure necessary to run the program "Pharmaceuticals". It has well-equipped lecture halls with projectors and computers, a Simulation Center, working spaces for students, including free access to the library resources. As a whole, students have a proper learning environment with appropriate equipment, space and possibilities for cooperation and group work. The Library is equipped with necessary literature, communication technologies and includes a reading hall, and provides access to international academic databases, journals and ebooks. The condition and functionality of the IT equipment is satisfactory. Besides, an electronic teaching method is used, supported by the electronic Moodle portal. All resources are available to students and teaching staff. This has been confirmed during the interview with the Directors of the study programs, students and teaching staff. Full description of the equipment is given in the Annex, No. 14.

From the academic year 2019/20 on the program has a modern chemical laboratory equipped with all necessary devices and instruments. This chemistry laboratory provides many specific studying courses, like food supplements, general chemistry, analytical chemistry, pharmaceutical chemistry, organic chemistry.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. The College's own revenues in 2020 were formed from revenues for educational services 82 405.00€ in the study program "Pharmaceuticals", various professional development courses 40 102.00€ and other services provided 14 787.00€. The minimum number of students in this study program to ensure the profitability of the study program "Pharmaceuticals" is 36. The last admission was in September of 2020/21, and included 36 students. Total number of students at the study program is 101. Number of dropout students is 10 (Program Annexes, No. 2). It is evident that the program has sufficient students to generate sufficient income.

According to the on-site interviews with the administration and program director, there is evidence for a strong financial management and a focus on increasing the efficiency of expenditure and attracting new sources of income, which together provides confidence for the future of the new program of the College. The studying process is almost completely based on private financing, 6 students from the complete submission in 2021 are provided state budget places.

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

The College possesses a full infrastructure necessary to run the program "Pharmaceuticals". It has well-equipped lecture halls with projectors and computers, a Simulation Center, working spaces for students, including free access to the library resources. As a whole, students have a proper learning environment with appropriate equipment, space and possibilities for cooperation and group work. According to the on-site interviews with the administration and program director, there is evidence for a strong financial management and a focus on increasing the efficiency of expenditure and attracting new sources of income, which together provides confidence for the future of the new program of the College.

Strengths:

1. A modern chemical laboratory equipped with all necessary devices and instruments.
2. An electronic teaching method used, supported by the electronic platform Moodle.

Weaknesses:

None.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The College possesses a full infrastructure necessary to run the program "Pharmaceuticals". It has well-equipped lecture halls with projectors and computers, a Simulation Center, working spaces for students, including free access to the library resources.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The preparation of lecturers complies with the requirements for the implementation of the curriculum and the provisions of normative acts. As a large part of the lecturers also work professionally in the field of health care (as heard in meetings with lecturers), which ensures close cooperation of lecturers with employers and modern professional know-how. Mainly pharmaceutical care experts are implementing the study programme (see SAR page 222-225). However, ensuring

the pedagogical competences of part-time teachers is a concern.

2.4.2. The Methodological Department has been established in the College (see SAR pages 13 and 31), which supports both beginning and experienced lecturers in finding the best and most suitable learning and assessment methods (including self-tests in Moodle and Kahoot) in a rapidly changing situation. Lecturers also have the opportunity to learn from each other (collegial observation etc.; see SAR page 228) and participate in various (including pedagogical) training at the RSU. Nevertheless, there is no clear system for guiding beginners to teacher training. The composition of the teaching staff changed from 2016–2021, mainly by changing the visiting teaching staff and electing academic positions at the College, because of the changes of the content of the study programme (see SAR page 226). The teaching staff regularly improves their qualification by participating in professional development events, conferences and publishing articles in academic publications (see SAR page 227). The lecturers working in the study programme are also active members of Pharmacists` Society in Latvia (see SAR page 225).

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. As five lecturers with PhD, and four applicants for a scientific degree (see SAR page 222), the competence to conduct research is available and opportunities for this are also created by College creating grants (see SAR page 80) and directing money to research. There are enough lecturers with a degree to do preliminary research and write peer-reviewed articles; but it would be important to direct more teachers to obtain a PhD. The lecturers have carried out successfully applied research projects with students (for example: „Use of Medicines, Food Supplements and Herbal Preparations in Latvia and Related Patients` Health Risks” (see SAR page 227). Unfortunately, only few lecturers in the Pharmaceuticals curriculum have published in peer-reviewed journals in recent years (see annex No. 13) and thus the achievement of the goal (publication in a peer-reviewed journal for six years) is questionable. As the teaching staff has changed in recent years, it is likely that not enough attention has yet been paid to publishing. Many of them also work professionally more than the last 5 years (for example in a clinical environment). The necessity and importance of maintaining professional practical experience in addition to teaching work was pointed out by the lecturers themselves as well as students and alumni. Closer research cooperation with international partners would be advisable. Language learning (English) would be also helpful, which would facilitate, among other things, international co-operation in the field of research, as well as publication in peer-reviewed journals.

2.4.5. Regular monthly meetings between teachers, collegial observations (see SAR page 228–229), close co-operation with employers (feedback from employers during the interview) ensure close co-operation in the curriculum, including the sharing of teaching methods and experience.

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

The preparation of lecturers complies with the requirements for the implementation of the curriculum and the provisions of normative acts. The teaching staff regularly improves their qualification by participating in professional development events, conferences and publishing articles in academic publications. Lecturers have close co-operation with each other, as well as co-operation with employers, but there seems to be no support for publishing the results of research studies.

Strengths:

1. Lecturers are professionals in their field.



2. Close and consistent cooperation between lecturers and with employers.
3. The lecturers of the curriculum are successful in the field of research.

Weaknesses:

1. Academic staff seem to have insufficient time to devote to writing peer-reviewed articles.

## Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The teaching staff meets the requirements of regulatory acts and the principles of a modern educational institution due to the fact that large number of them are also practitioners in the respective fields which also facilitates close and consistent cooperation with representatives of labor market.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study program fully complies with the Cabinet Regulations No.141 "Regulations on the first level Professional Higher Education State Standard".

See point 3.2. Content and implementation of studies, attachment 3 in e-platform:

3\_Pharmaceuticals\_Compliance to the State Education Standard.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

New standard is in approvment process:

ps0369 (visc.gov.lv)

Study program already complies with the new professional standard.

See point 3.2. Content and implementation of studies, attachment 4 in e-platform:

4\_Pharmaceuticals\_Compliance with the profession standard.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials are in line with the requirements set forth in Section 56.(1) , Paragraph two and Section 56.(2) , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

But some of the literature listed is outdated. That is why the requirement is partially compliant.  
All necessary documents are prepared in Latvian language.

### 3.2. Content and implementation of studies

7\_Farmācija\_Studiju kursu apraksti.zip

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Diploma issued complies with Regulation of Minister Cabinet Nr. 202, according to which state recognized documents of higher education are issued.

See point 3.1. Parameters characterizing the study program, attachment 1, e-platform

1\_Pharmaceuticals\_diploma and diploma supplement.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

See point 2.1. Study field management, attachment nr. 11. in e-platform:

11\_Confirmation of the adequacy of the academic staff's knowledge of the state language.jpg

No. 1-11/7, Riga. Director of Red Cross medical College certifies with her signature that the knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study program "Pharmaceuticals" corresponds to 2009 of 7 July 733 "Regulations regarding the amount of knowledge of the state language, the procedure for the examination of proficiency in the state language and the state fee for the examination of proficiency in the state language"

Point 2.1. Study field management, Attachment 10, Teaching staff CV

10\_Curriculum Vitae in English language.zip

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant.

See point 2.1. Study field management, Attachment nr. 7 in e-platform

7\_Study agreement on the State budget dotation and on the Physical, legal entity funds.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant.

Agreement between LU 1. Medical College and RSU Red Cross Medical College signed on 21. of April in 2021.

See e-platform, point 2.1. Study field management, attachment 5 in Latvian language, page 3:

5\_Vienošanās par studiju turpināšanu citās izglītības iestādēs.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Requirement is fully compliant.

See point 2.1. Study field management, Attachment nr. 6 in e-platform:

Order NR. 1-8/135, 23.12.2021. in Riga determine:

In that case, Red Cross Medical College of Riga Stradiņš university students in the study programs "Medicine" (41 721), "Therapeutic Massage" (41 722), and "Pharmacy" (41 725) suppose the study program license is not accredited or revoked due to the college's actions (actions or omissions). The student does not wish to continue studies in another study program; compensation for losses will be provided.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

See point 3.2. Content and implementation of studies, attachment 4.1 in e-platform:

4.1.\_Compliance of the study program\_ Pharmaceuticals with the normative regulations of the branch.docx

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The study program partially complies with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions where it is applicable and other binding regulatory enactments. This is due to deficiencies in study course descriptions and in particular the outdated recommended literature.

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

Study program "Pharmaceuticals" complies with all the requirements that are applicable in point 2.5. No significant deficiencies in these requirements were found.

Program has been adapted to the latest professional standard even though it is still in the approval process. Studies are executed in Latvian language and all necessary documents and materials are in Latvian language except latest research and evidence based literature - for that good English knowledge is required.

Strengths:

1. Cooperation with chain pharmacies that provide scholarships, student soft skill development, student engagement in research projects, transparent evaluation process.
2. Staff members are motivated to take part in pedagogical skill development which ensures the quality of the educational process.

Weaknesses:

1. Insufficient English language knowledge among some students and teachers.
2. Minor deficiencies in the traineeship programs related to drug compounding (difficult to understand the real amount of actual compounding done-this was established during the interviews) however the influence of the overall situation of drug compounding in pharmacies in Latvia should be considered in this situation.
3. Some recommended literature is older than 10 years

The stated shortcomings of the study program are considered insufficient to reduce the overall assessment for the following reasons:

- 1) in case of assessment of language skills, the subjective element of interviews should be taken into account,
- 2) in the case of recommended literature, the dynamics of its renewal should be respected, that is, how regularly new volumes of the literature in question are added and published.
- 3) other mentioned weaknesses are already classified as minor and therefore deserve attention but does not affect the valuation.

In the view of the expert team, the strengths of the given study program outweigh its weaknesses.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Pharmaceuticals"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

### **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Pharmaceuticals"**

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

## Long-term recommendations

### 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 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant		College has its own internal quality assurance system that is accessible here: <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BdSPFLixBVRvGxWnXWKmCblx4p4lqN4s/edit">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BdSPFLixBVRvGxWnXWKmCblx4p4lqN4s/edit</a> which sets goals for continuous improvement and development.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant		Despite shortcomings in some aspects of academic staff involvement, the scientific research work conducted in the College generally meets the requirements of a modern and sustainable process with future potential with adequate financing and provisions.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.		Partially compliant	There is a positive tendency for the College to develop cooperation with both local and foreign institutions. However some of the documents need updates and detailed procedures for attracting more interested parties from abroad is needed.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant			Overall, all the deficiencies and shortcomings have been addressed. Only minor problem is that it is not clear regarding the study course "Emergency Situations in Pediatrics" whether the recommendation is implemented as the information stated in the SAR is not compliant with what is accessible in the study course description. It should be overlooked.

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

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Treatment (41721)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Excellent
2	Treatment (41721)	Not relevant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
3	Therapeutic Massage (41722)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Excellent
4	Pharmaceuticals (41725)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Excellent

### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

None.