

JOINT REPORT BY THE EXPERTS ON THE INCLUSION OF A LICENSED STUDY
PROGRAMME ON THE ACCREDITATION FORM

Agency of University of Daugavpils

"Daugavpils Medical College of University of Daugavpils"

STUDY FIELD

Health Care

STUDY PROGRAMME

Short cycle professional higher education study programme "Podology"

Experts:

Darja Nesteroviča-Petrikova

Keith Graeme McCormick

15.03.2024

Table of contents

I. Summary of the Assessment	3
II. Description of the study programme	4
1. Indicators describing the Study Programme	4
2. Topicality of the study programme	8
3. Resources and provision	11
4. Implementation of the recommendations received during the licensing of the study programme	20
III. Assessment of the study programme	20
IV. Recommendations	21

I. Summary of the Assessment

Podology offers specialised expertise in foot care that is distinct from general medical or nursing education. This specialisation allows podologists to focus specifically on foot health and provide comprehensive care tailored to the unique needs of the lower extremities. The need for podologists is not limited to any specific region or country. As foot health issues affect individuals worldwide, there is a growing demand for qualified podologists locally and globally, making the study of podology highly relevant.

The study programme ‘‘Podology’’ 41722 (study programme) complies with the formal requirements set by Latvian legislation. (Section 3, R4). Study programme formally complies with the State Standard of Professional Higher Education 305 ‘‘Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās augstākās izglītības standartu’’.

Material resources are insufficient for the qualitative provision of the reported study programme. Podology specific study materials that are available in the library partially comply with delivered study courses. The qualifications and professional development of the staff fits the legal requirements but can be improved, e.g., inviting visiting dermatologists and orthotist-prosthetists for course delivery (Section 3 of the Report, R2 analysis).

The Agency of University of Daugavpils "Daugavpils Medical College of University of Daugavpils’’ (College) offers essential support for implementing the reported study programme. Its extensive curriculum appeals to students, aligning with high demand for specialists in the field and current industry trends. Students have the flexibility to opt for either part-time or full-time study formats. Additionally, the study programme financing model ensures that costs for a study place in the study programme at College remain competitive compared to other colleges in Latvia. The College premises are inviting, conducive to learning, and provide a supportive environment. Furthermore, the infrastructure is well-suited for the studies.

Overall experts recommend that the study programme be included in the accreditation form within this study field ‘‘ Health Care’’ (study field).

The terms "podology" and "podiatry" are distinct and should not be used interchangeably when referring to this 120 ECTS, level 5 study programme in podology. The course descriptors accurately reflect the content relevant to the field of study, and the academic staff are highly knowledgeable in their respective subject areas. However, experts believe that there is room for improvement in terms of incorporating more content applicable to clinical practice. This could involve increasing the involvement of qualified podologists in teaching the clinical practice and simulation elements.

Strengths:

1. Experts were assured that the study programme complies with government regulations for the training of podologists.
2. All the materials presented in the study course descriptions are relevant to the subject area and education is supported by an academic team who are highly qualified in their specific specialist areas.
3. Highly qualified academic staff to teach the theory aspects that relate to podology.
4. Excellent use of modern and effective virtual learning environment.
5. Sophisticated network of senior individuals from local providers who are keen to work with you further.
6. Excellent employment opportunities for qualified podologists.

Weaknesses:

1. The study programme is too heavily reliant on theoretical teaching with not enough exposure to clinical activities and practice placement led by qualified podologists.
2. It was not made clear to the experts how students are assessed in practice and how parity is ensured from one practice area to another.
3. The study programme should be more focused on hands-on clinical practice with a higher proportion of ECTS dependent on the assessment of clinical activities and hands-on clinical practice.
4. Lack of qualified podologists on the teaching team who can contextualize the theory to practice.
5. Students appear not to be competent in literature searching (relevant journal articles from medical databases).
5. There are some important podology topics that are currently under represented or missing from the course descriptions.

II. Description of the study programme

1. Indicators describing the Study Programme

1.	Name of the higher education institution/college	<i>Agency of University of Daugavpils "Daugavpils Medical College of University of Daugavpils"</i>
2.	Name of the study field corresponding to the study programme	<i>Health Care</i>
3.	Name of the study programme	<i>Short cycle (first level) professional higher education study programme "Podology"</i>

4.	Code of the study programme in accordance with the Latvian Education Classification	41722
5.	Language of study programme implementation	<i>Latvian</i>
6.	Amount, duration, form and type of the study programme (also distance-learning)	<i>Full-time – 2 years / 80 CP (120 ECTS) Part-time – 2 years and 6 months /80 CP (120 ECTS)</i>
7.	Admission requirements	<i>Secondary education</i>
8.	Address of the study programme implementation, indicating whether the study programme is implemented in the branches of the higher education institution / college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>26A Warsaws Street, Daugavpils, LV-5404, Latvia</i> • <i>Miera street 3/5, Daugavpils, LV-5404, Latvia</i>
9.	Degree, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification to be awarded	<i>qualification: Podologist (qualification level 5)</i>
10.	Date of study programme licensing	<i>27.04.2022.</i>
11.	Date of starting the implementation of the study programme	<i>01.09.2022.</i>
12.	Accreditation term of the study field	<i>27.10.2028.</i>

Analysis

1.1. Compliance of the study programme with the study field

Experts have been assured within the report and in person at the assessment visit that the tasks of the study programme are to academically, intellectually and professionally prepare students in accordance with the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 of 13 June 2023 “Regulations Regarding the State Standard of Professional Higher Education” and the “Profession Standard of a Podologist” agreed at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council on Vocational Education and Employment of 9 June 2021, Minutes No. 4.

Experts think that clarification is required on the use of the term “Podiatrist” and how this is interpreted in the context of this two-year study programme of study in “Podology”. In addition to this, all assessments are carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 305 of 13.06.2023 and with Cabinet Regulations No. 268 of 24.03.2009, part 7.9. guided by the following criteria: the amount and quality of knowledge acquired; acquired skills; acquired competence in accordance with the planned study results.

The experts recognize that Podology is part of the College alongside various other study programmes such as Physicians Assistant, Emergency Medicine Physician, Masseur, and Beauty specialist in cosmetology.

These programmes share resources and facilities, making it logical to include Podology in the broader field of "Health Care". If there are aspirations to expand the role and scope of Podology in Latvia, it may be more suitable for Podology to be aligned with Nursing and Physiotherapy within the University in the long run, potentially through the introduction of a Bachelor's degree in Podiatry.

1.2. Compliance between the title of the study programme and the qualification.

According to the College report on the inclusion of the study programme on the accreditation form of the study field "Health Care" (Report page 11), the objectives of the study programme are to provide students with the opportunity to study in the system of the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework in the first-level (short-cycle) professional higher education study programme "Podology" and to prepare highly qualified, modernly educated, competent and competitive specialists in **podiatry** on the labour market. This is a level 5 professional qualification in "Podology" requiring a total of 120 ECTS points for completion. In the UK, Spain, Australia etc, a podiatrist would be Bachelor degree trained and have completed 180 ECTS points or equivalent. Considering that the terms podology and podiatry are not interchangeable, and considering the scope of practice outlined in the documentation (Report), experts would only proceed using the term "Podology" for this two-year qualification.

The experts believe that the study programme "Podology" is suitable and meets the requirements of a 120 ECTS 2-year professional qualification level 5 programme of study, and also aligns with the qualifications that can be obtained after completing this study programme (*Podologist*).

1.3. Compliance of the study programme indicators (study programme code, amount, implementation duration) with the learning outcomes defined for it.

The code (41 722) of the study programme corresponds to Cabinet Regulation No. 322. (13.06.2017) on the Latvian Education Classification. The first two digits of the study programme code (41) indicate that this is a short-cycle study programme, the other three digits (722) indicate that the programme corresponds to the group of educational programmes "medical services", included under the thematic area of health care. Considering that this is a short-cycle programme, the educational classification stipulates that a professional qualification is awarded after graduation, which in this case coincides with the title of the study programme.

The volume of the study programme, duration of implementation, parts of the study programme and their scope, compulsory content, professional qualification, basic principles and procedures of evaluation, principles of implementation of the volume of internships, etc. is regulated by Cabinet Regulation No 305 (13.06.2023) "Regulations Regarding the State Standard of Professional Higher Education".

Experts understand that the study programme is structured to adhere to the legislation and government regulations referred above. Experts do however have a number of observations related to the study

programme structure and content. Overall the modules and module parts are all relevant to the study programme, however there are very few areas where specific clinical skills are demonstrated or assessed. The study course description “Diabetology patient care” (3 ECTS) does touch on some important clinical competencies, however the teaching and assessment appears to be more theoretical, rather than an assessment of practical competence. This course description talks about international guidelines but refers to 7.05g monofilaments when all the guidelines use 10g monofilament testing for neuropathy. The percentage of hours attributed to student independent learning is quite low compared to lecture hours and seminars.

The study programme as it stands seems to have quite a low level of clinical practice placement included. Experts understand that there is 160 hours of observed clinical practice (not actually treating patient pathology) in the 1st year, and a further 480 hours of clinical practice in the second year which is a combination of theory and hands-on practice. During the assessment visit no-one was able to answer the question “how many hours of hands-on clinical practice are the students exposed to”. Using the data above an estimation of 240 hours would seem reasonable.

Experts felt that this would not be enough clinical hours/experience to treat pathologies post qualifying independently (including high risk activities like the debridement of diabetic foot ulcers). Experts were informed that the benchmark is to treat 12 patients with different pathologies in the 2nd year placement; the experts felt that this would not be enough to demonstrate independent competence in the treatment of foot pathologies encountered by a qualified podologist. To ensure parity across placements, formalized training and support should be provided to all identified clinical educators on how to assess students in practice. A register of clinical educators could be created which individual podologists can join on completion of their initial training.

Conclusions:

The terms ‘podology’ and ‘podiatry’ are distinct and should not be used interchangeably. When referring to the study programme of podology, it is recommended to avoid using the term "podiatry". The course descriptors accurately describe the relevant content in the field of study, and the academic staff are highly knowledgeable in their respective subject areas. However, experts suggest that incorporating more content applicable to clinical practice would be beneficial, particularly by involving qualified podologists in teaching the clinical practice and simulation components.

Strengths:

1. Experts were assured that the study programme complies with government regulations for the training of podologists.

2. All the materials presented in the study course descriptions are relevant to the subject area and education is supported by an academic team.

Weaknesses:

1. The study programme is too heavily reliant on theoretical teaching with not enough exposure to clinical activities and practice placement led by qualified podologists.

2. It was not made clear to the experts how students are assessed in practice and how parity is ensured from one practice area to another.

3. The study programme should be more focused on hands-on clinical practice with a higher proportion of ECTS dependent on the assessment of clinical activities and hands-on clinical practice.

2. Topicality of the study programme

Analysis

2.1. The topicality of the study programme and the compliance of the content with the tendencies of the industry (area), the changes made since the licensing of the study programme

It is the opinion of the experts that the study programme is overly heavy in theory, and that students should receive more exposure to the clinical environment in the form of formal supervised clinical practice within local healthcare environments. The teaching staff are listed in annex 6 (6.pielikums_ Studiju programmas īstenošanā iesaistītie mācītāji). Of the 22 academic staff, it appears that only one of the staff members is a Podologist by background (Oksana Anisjko), who only works part time for the College. Although the staff are highly qualified in their field, and there is no doubt that the students will be receiving a wide and varied curriculum, there is some concern that the knowledge imparted in the various modules may not be contextualised fully to the clinical aspects of Podology. This approach differs from the tendencies of the industry/area, where podologists or podiatrists would be more heavily involved in the theory aspects of the course. Experts understand that podology is relatively new to Latvia (perhaps 10 years), with only one other provider in existence (P.Stradins medical college of the University of Latvia) and that finding academics who are also podologists will be difficult.

The study programme report states that students are provided with the professional knowledge, skills and competence based on research to develop the ability to independently conduct scientific research, to develop analytical abilities in the profession. This is a very ambitious statement which does not match with the knowledge skills and competence described in the “Research methods and digitisation in healthcare” study course description. Even a postdoctoral student (after PhD) would struggle to say that they independently

conduct scientific research. This wording needs to be reviewed. The research methods course description suggests that students are able to perform “targeted selection of literature and analysis of insights in study works”, it was clear talking to the students during assessment visit that this was a difficult area and they were unable to give examples of foot and ankle related journals, they were also unaware of the IWGDF guidelines which are also explicitly mentioned in the course descriptions.

Experts felt that the following topics were under-represented or missing in the course descriptions provided: gait analysis, biomechanics, musculoskeletal pathology and assessment, specific dermatology assessment and diagnosis related to podology, referral pathways to multidisciplinary teams or appropriate specialists. It is worth noting that some of these topics are included also in the “Professional Standard of a Podologist”, approved by the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council on Vocational Education and Employment on 09.06.2021. Therefore, experts recommend that the College thoroughly review the course content to ensure that these topics are fully integrated.

Looking at annex 9 (9.pielikums_Rekomendāciju ieviešanas pārskats), it is clear that some of the recommendations of the expert group have been acted on since licensing, particularly the contracts that are now in place with various practice placement areas, and the use of a specific virtual learning environment. Experts were given a useful demonstration of the Mykoob system during an interactive anatomy training session. However, one of the recommendations related to the updating of supporting literature, it is the opinion of the experts that the references cited in the study course descriptions are out of date (some from the last century).

2.2. Dynamics of the student number and prospects of employment for graduates.

Student prospects are clearly one of the great strengths of this study programme. Experts were privileged to spend time with senior staff from many of the local health care organisations demonstrating a clear unmet podological need in acute and community settings. These potential employers demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm for the programme of study “podology” which sits within the study field “health care”. During the assessment visit, experts asked the question: “How does the group feel about taking more students for hands-on clinical placements for longer periods of time.” All of them agreed that that would be possible and gave examples of how that could work in their own organisations. Several organisations stated that they were ready to employ between 5 and 8 qualified podologists. The employers were also keen to seek financial grants from government or charitable organisations to support training places.

When asking about student attrition experts were told that 19 students started this year with 5 prematurely leaving their studies for various social reasons, leaving 14 students remaining. Capacity appears to be

somewhere around 15 students. Interestingly when talking to 5 students all of them wanted to work in private practice and set up their own business in private practice on completion of the course.

Conclusions:

Of the 22 academic staff listed only one is a registered podologist. Although staff are highly qualified they may not have the required working experience of podology directly to contextualise content to professional activities and clinical practice. Some of the claims made around research competencies are very ambitious and do not align with what is stated in the study course descriptions or feedback from the students on the day of expert visit. There are some important podology topics that are not included in the course descriptions. The panel notes that a modern and effective virtual learning environment is being used and that podology facilities are excellent at the College. Experts also observed that College are beginning to formulate an important network of clinical practice placement providers for their students. The prospects for student employment are promising, surrounded by a sophisticated network of senior individuals from local healthcare providers who are eager to assist in expanding placements and hiring qualified podologists.

Strengths:

1. Highly qualified academic staff to teach the theory aspects that relate to podology.
2. Excellent use of modern and effective virtual learning environment.
3. Sophisticated network of senior individuals from local providers who are keen to work with you further.
4. Excellent employment opportunities for qualified podologists.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of qualified podologists on the teaching team who can contextualise the theory to practice.
2. Students appear not to be competent in literature searching (relevant journal articles from medical databases).
3. Students appear not to have knowledge of the international guidelines mentioned in the course descriptions.
4. There are some important podology topics that are currently under represented or missing from the course descriptions.

3. Resources and provision

Requirement [R1]: Compliance of the study base, science base (if applicable), information base (including library), material and technical base and financial base with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and for ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

Analysis

Adequate infrastructure resources are allocated to support the study and research processes of the study programme. College provides the theoretical and practical study base necessary for the implementation of the study programme. The study base is located on the property owned by College in Daugavpils, Warsaw Street 26A, and Miera Street 3/5. During the assessment visit tour of the facilities at College, the expert group gathered evidence that students and academic staff have access to essential resources. The placement shown offers a comfortable space for study. Additionally, the dormitory is available on site for College students and visiting academic staff. Free internet access is available on site. The College library has an electronic database for searching for available material. Access to all major databases including ScienceDirect, Scopus, and EBSCO is provided by the college. During the assessment visit meetings, academic staff confirmed that podology-specific library resources are not sufficient, but the purchase of new study materials is being planned.

Resources such as textbooks, anatomical models, and clinical practice guidelines aid in the development of hands-on skills like foot examination, treatment techniques, and the use of specialised equipment. Comprehensive study materials can help students prepare for licensure exams by covering all necessary topics and ensuring they have the knowledge and skills required to become certified podologists. Access to current research articles, case studies, and clinical trials enables students to stay updated on the latest advancements and incorporate evidence-based interventions into their practice, but during the assessment visit the students did not show any knowledge of foot care or podology specific academic journals. In order to promote research, the scientific conference is organised yearly by the College. Additionally, students can attend courses from Latvian Association of Podology for students for free. The e-learning environment is provided by the Mykoob platform.

Clinical skills have been trained in a practice room that is equipped according to the legislation (Regulations Nr.60. of 20/01/2009 and Nr.104 16/02/2016, issued by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia) and recommendations of Latvian Society of Podologists (Report, p.27.) in accordance with the Professional Standard of a Podologist (*approved by the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council on Vocational Education*

and Employment on 09.06.2021. To increase the available clinical cases starting from May 2024 it is planned to establish an ambulatory podology clinic.

It is described in the Report of study programme that the financial support for the study programme has not been provided by the state budget. Without sufficient financial support for education, there may be a shortage of qualified podologists to meet the healthcare needs of the population, leading to gaps in service provision and potential negative health outcomes for patients. Cost of the study programme could become a barrier to entry for many prospective students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. This can limit access to education and perpetuate inequalities in the field of podology. Inadequate financial support can impact the competitiveness of podology programmes compared to other healthcare specialties. Students may opt for fields with better financial aid options or job prospects, leading to a shortage of skilled podologists in the healthcare workforce. However, the costs of the studies currently are estimated at EUR 2.000 which in general does not exceed the costs for the preparation of one student in the same specialisation at P.Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia. Although the cost of the study programme could become a barrier to entry for many prospective students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. This can limit access to education and perpetuate inequalities in the field of podology. College also provides information about the existing cooperation with employer JSC "Veselības centrs apvienība" that compensates tuition fee for one student (Report, p.26), but there is no information on the procedure how this student was chosen by an employer.

Conclusions:

The study, information, material, technical and financial base of the study programme fully meets the conditions for implementing the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes. College has created a modern study environment with an excellent technical base for the development of clinical skills. Library resources include the most useful databases, but study materials are insufficient. The financial base is managed by students.

Strengths:

1. College provides the necessary technical infrastructure for the implementation of the reported study programme.
2. Clinical practice is available on site. An ambulatory podology clinic is being planned.

Weaknesses:

1. Insufficient study materials are provided by the Library.
2. Lack of financial support for podology education.

Evaluation of the requirement [R1]:

Requirement	Compliance			Justification
	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	
Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), information provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and for ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.	X			Material resources are compliant with the profile of the study programme and provide possibilities to elaborate highly qualified podologists. The expert pointed out a couple of issues, including the insufficient study materials provided by the Library and the lack of financial support for podology education. However, these issues do not directly affect the implementation of study programme but are areas that can be improved upon.

Requirement [R2]: 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 of the laws and regulations.

Analysis

It must be acknowledged that out of 22 lecturers who are involved in the implementation of the study programme 5 hold a doctoral degree (21,7%), 14 - master's degree (60,9%). Additionally, one lecturer is a Ph.D. candidate and another one has started doctoral studies. Mostly, visiting lecturers (15) are involved in the course delivery, only eight are elected lecturers. Teaching staff qualification complies with Cabinet of Minister (CM) Regulation No. 268 (24.03.2009) part 2 "The regulations on the competence of healthcare professionals and students who are acquiring first or second level professional higher medical education programmes and the scope of theoretical and practical knowledge of these persons in medicine". During the assessment visit, the teaching staff prioritized the creation of a democratic and free atmosphere in the

study process, facilitating academic learning and showed contribution to the holistic development of students' personalities, preparing them to excel professionally and ethically.

A visiting lecturer could not be considered appropriate to deliver the study course Orthopaedics and Basics of Prosthetics in Orthopaedics (Annex 6: “6.pielikums_Studiju programmas īstenošanā iesaistītie mācītbspēki”) due to the previously acquired qualification of an orthopaedic surgeon. It might negatively affect the quality of the course delivery. Additionally, dermatologist is not involved in the study course Symptomatology of dermatological diseases. Dermatological conditions are common in podology practice, and understanding their symptomatology is essential for accurate diagnosis and treatment. Without input from a dermatologist, students may lack comprehensive knowledge of dermatological diseases affecting the feet, leading to misdiagnosis or inadequate treatment. Without involvement from dermatologists in the study programme, opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and collaboration may be missed, potentially leading to fragmented care and suboptimal patient outcomes. Moreover, the gait biomechanics course is not implemented. Podologists often encounter patients with foot issues related to gait abnormalities. Gait biomechanics is crucial for understanding the underlying causes of such problems and developing appropriate treatment plans. The absence of a gait biomechanics course deprives students of valuable skills and knowledge needed to address these issues effectively.

During the assessment visit meeting with the study programme director, it was acknowledged that difficulties exist in finding specific lecturers for the Podology study programme. However, no new staff recruitment approaches were mentioned.

From Annex 8: “8.pielikums_Statistikas dati par mācītbspēku ienākošo un izejošo mobilitāti pārskata periodā” it is possible to conclude that there has been active outgoing mobility of an academic staff during the academic year 2022/2023. The Report also revealed that four lecturers have participated in the ERASMUS + programme (Report, p.34). During the assessment visit, no evidence was given on how these activities impact the quality of the study programme. Incoming mobility was not reported, so the internationalisation of the study programme is not well-enhanced.

Conclusions:

A prominent number of lecturers who are involved in the implementation of the study programme have a master degree (60,9%). The impact of staff mobility on the quality of the study programme is unknown. Incoming mobility is not implemented. However, it is important to work on attracting teaching staff who teach courses according to their specialties.

Strengths:

1. The qualification of the academic staff of the reported study programme comply with the regulations and laws.
2. Lecturers are qualified and motivated to create a democratic and free atmosphere in the study process which in turn stimulates the growth of students' personalities, their academic and professional perfection.

Weaknesses:

1. Academic staff mobility has a low impact in study programme development.
2. The visiting lecturers' suitability for delivering the study course Orthopaedics and Basics of Prosthetics in Orthopaedics and Symptomatology of Dermatological Diseases should be reconsidered due to the lack of appropriate expertise in the study field.

Evaluation of the requirement [R2]:

Requirement	Compliance			Justification
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 of the laws and regulations.	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	The qualifications of the constant academic staff of the study programme comply with the requirements of the laws and regulations except for two visiting lecturers. Incoming mobility from other universities should be enhanced.
		x		

Requirement [R3]: 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 artistic creation (if applicable).

Analysis

n/a

Conclusions, strengths and weaknesses

n/a

Evaluation of the requirement [R3]:

Requirement	Compliance	Justification
-------------	------------	---------------

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 artistic creation (if applicable).	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	n/a

Requirement [R4]: Compliance of the study programme with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other laws and regulations.

No.	Requirement	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	Justification
1.	<p>The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard, including the minimum requirements for the content of the compulsory civil protection course and the content of civil protection training for employees specified for the implementation of the study programme.</p> <p>The study courses of the professional study programmes include a module for the development of professional competence of entrepreneurship in the amount of at least 9 CP (ECTS), if it has not been acquired in the previous professional study programme or is not included in the theoretical basic courses of the study programme branch (field of professional activity).</p>	x			<p>The study programme complies with Cabinet of Minister (CM) Regulation No. 305 (13.06.2023) "Regulations Regarding the State Standard of Professional Higher Education", Civil (2CP) and Environmental Protection (2CP), Annex 1 and according to annex: 3.pielikums Studiju plans, the study programme contains study modules for the formation of entrepreneurial professional competencies of podologist in the amount of 8 CP (12 ECTS).</p>
2.	<p>The study programme complies with a valid professional (occupational) standard, or with the requirements of professional qualification (if it is not necessary to develop a professional standard for the profession), if a professional</p>	x			<p>The annex titled "2.pielikums Studiju programmas_Podoloģija_atbilstība_profesiju_standartam" demonstrates compliance with the Professional Standard of a Podologist, which was approved by the Tripartite</p>

	qualification is awarded after acquisition of the study programme				Cooperation Sub-Council on Vocational Education and Employment on 09.06.2021. However, in chapter 2.1. of this report, experts have raised concerns about various topics that the College should investigate.
3.	The code of the study programme complies with the Cabinet regulations on the Latvian Education Classification	x			The code (41722) of the study programme corresponds to Cabinet Regulation No. 322. (13.06.2017) on the Latvian Education Classification.
4.	The qualification of the teaching staff ¹ complies with the conditions and requirements set for the implementation of the study programme, which are specified in the regulatory enactments in the field of education including the participation in the implementation of an academic study programme of at least five professors and associate professors together who have been elected to academic positions in the respective higher education institution, except in the cases provided for in Section 55, Part two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.	x			The teaching staff are certified and appropriate. 60,9% of academic staff hold a Masters degree.
5.	Confirmation of the higher education institution/college that 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, according to the European Language Proficiency Assessment levels (the division of levels is available on the website www.europass.lv), if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a	x			Based on the self-assessments provided in the CVs of the academic staff participating in the implementation of the study programme, 36% are native Latvian speakers, while 23% have proficiency in Latvian at the C1/C2 level.

¹ As used in this document, the term “teaching staff” refers to the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting lecturers, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants of the corresponding higher education institution / college.

	foreign language or proficiency of the Latvian language at least on the B2 level, if the study programme or a part thereof is intended to be implemented in the Latvian language and the lecturer has not acquired secondary or higher education in the Latvian language.				
6.	The study programme, which is intended to be implemented in a foreign language, complies with the requirements of Section 56, Part three of the Law on Higher Education Institutions				Not applicable.
7.	The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement (if applicable).	x			Compliance with Cabinet of Minister Regulations No.70 "In the study agreement, mandatory terms to be included." (23.01.2007)
8.	The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state recognised documents of higher education are issued (if applicable).	x			Information has not changed since the licensing procedure.
9.	The higher education institution/ college has confirmed that it will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued (if applicable).	x			College has signed an agreement with P. Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia on 23.03.2022 (Annex 5: '5.pielikums_LUPSK Nodomu protoklos').
10.	The higher education institution/ college has confirmed that it guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college	x			Information has not changed since the licensing procedure.

	(actions or omissions) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme (if applicable).				
11.	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).				Not applicable.
12.	The scientific and pedagogical qualification of doctors of science complies with the criteria specified in the regulatory enactments regarding the evaluation of the scientific and pedagogical qualification of a candidate for the position of a professor and an associate professor (if applicable).				Not applicable.
13.	The joint study programme complies with the requirements prescribed in Section 55 ¹ , of the Law on the Higher Education Institutions (if applicable).				Not applicable.

Evaluation of the requirement [R4]:

Requirement	Compliance			Justification
	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	
Compliance of the study programme with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other laws and regulations.	X			The study programme complies with the formal requirements set by Latvian legislation.

4. Implementation of the recommendations received during the licensing of the study programme

Analysis

Looking at annex 9 (9.pielikums_Rekomendāciju ieviešanas pārskats), it is clear that some of the recommendations of the expert group have been acted on since licensing, particularly the contracts that are now in place with various practice placement areas, and the use of a specific virtual learning environment. Experts were given a useful demonstration of the Mykoob system during an interactive anatomy training session. However, one of the recommendations related to the updating of supporting literature, it is the opinion of the experts that the references cited in the study course descriptions are out of date (some from the last century).

Conclusions:

Recommendations from licensing are still more or less valid and actual for the improvement of the study programme and must be developed.

Strengths:

none

Weaknesses:

1. College should continue development of the study programme, reacting to the recommendations of the licensing of the study programme.

III. Assessment of the study programme

	Excellent
	Good
X	Average
	Poor

IV. Recommendations

X	experts recommend that the study programme be included in the accreditation form within this study field
	experts do not recommend including the study programme in the accreditation form within this study field

Short-term recommendations:

1. Improve availability of comprehensive and up-to-date study materials preparing students for successful careers as podologists.
2. Implement incoming teaching staff mobility. The cooperation with different partner universities or clinical practices could be enhanced to ensure the diversity of podology expertise coming to College.
3. There is a need to reconsider the suitability of lecturers who have appropriate expertise of Orthopaedics, Basics of Prosthetics in Orthopaedics, and Symptomatology of Dermatological Diseases for delivering the study courses.
4. The study programme should be more focused on hands-on clinical practice with a higher proportion of ECTS dependent on the assessment of clinical activities and hands-on clinical practice.
5. The study programme should make better use of qualified podologists on the teaching staff who can contextualise the theory to practice.
6. It is recommended to realise a biomechanics course in cooperation with a certified orthotist-prosthetist or Podiatrist.

Long term recommendations:

1. It is advised to enhance the internationalisation efforts of the study programme.
2. The programme team should continue to implement the recommendations of the expert panel.
3. The following topics of study should be introduced to the curriculum: gait analysis, biomechanics, musculoskeletal pathology and assessment, specific dermatology assessment and diagnosis related to podology.
4. In the longer term Faculty should consider whether Podology fits better with Nursing and Physiotherapy as a BSc programme within the University.
5. Faculty should consider whether there is an appetite in Latvia to develop the scope of practice for Podology and introduce a Podiatry programme to the University under the guidance of another higher education institution.

In the event that the opinions of the experts regarding any of the requirements or criteria differ, please indicate the dissenting opinion.

Name and surname of the expert, the dissenting opinion, a justification of the dissenting opinion.