

March 2026

**International Evaluation of Scientific
Institutions' Activity**



**Expert Group Report: Social Sciences Expert
Group 1**

Professor John Furlong (chair), Professor Claire Wallace, Professor Elise Poillot, Professor Jannis Angelis, Professor Tapio Raunio, Professor Marta Fulop



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Abbreviations

AI – Artificial Intelligence

ASPRI – Advanced Institute of Social and Political Research

BASBF – BA School of Business and Finance

CETS – Centre for European and Transition Studies

COST – European Cooperation in Science and Technology

COVID-19 – Coronavirus disease 2019

ERC – European Research Council

ESARMUS+ - European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students +

EU – European Union

FAIR – Findability, accessibility, interoperability, reusability

FEEM – Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management

FESS – Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences

FL – Faculty of Law

FTE – Full-time equivalent

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

iDEAHUB – Centre of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the Transport and Telecommunication Institute

IT – Information Technology

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NGO – non-governmental organisation

PI – Principal Investigator

Q1 – First quarter

Q2 – Second quarter

R&D – Research and Development

RIS3 – Research and Innovation Strategy 3

RSU - Riga Stradiņš University

RSU-SSP – Riga Stradiņš University Social Sciences Platform

RTU – Riga Technical University

TSI – Transport and Telecommunication Institute

UL – University of Latvia

WoS – Web of Science

This document is one of a series of reports in the International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions' Activity, 2025. It presents the findings of the Social Sciences Expert Group 1 about the research performance and international competitiveness of the units in scope. It also considers the units' socio-economic impact and their potential for future development. These results of the evaluation are intended both to provide inputs to policymaking and to recommendations to help the units improve their performance.

The Social Sciences Expert Group 1 evaluated the following units:

- Riga Stradiņš University, Social Sciences Platform
- BA School of Business and Finance
- Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, University of Latvia
- Faculty of Law, University of Latvia
- Daugavpils University, Research Programme "Social Sciences"
- Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management of Riga Technical University
- Riga Technical University Liepaja Academy
- ISMA Research Institute
- Transport and Telecommunication Institute
- Riga Graduate School of Law

The Expert Group evaluated the units using the following criteria:

- Quality of the research
- Impact on the scientific discipline
- Economic impact
- Social impact
- Research environment and infrastructure
- Development potential

The evaluation of each unit involved a documentary review and a site visit by the Expert Group to the units. The final evaluation of each unit published here represents the collective view of the Expert Group.

The analysis of each unit by the Expert Group is presented in the following sections.

Feedback on the Expert Group assessment received from the units is published in Appendix A.

S_1 Riga Stradiņš University, Social Sciences Platform

2.2.1 The unit

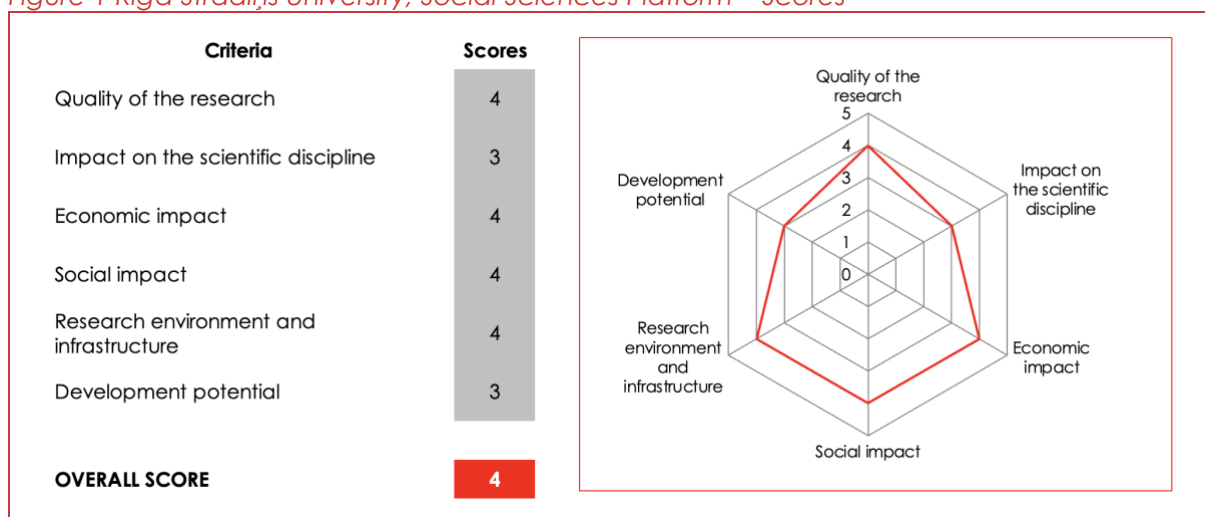
The Riga Stradiņš University Social Sciences Platform (RSU-SSP) is a research entity within Rīga Stradiņš University, focusing on social sciences. Its vision is to advance cutting-edge research in health, the environment, and security. The platform is committed to addressing social, political, and economic challenges through transdisciplinary research. It seeks to influence policy and shape communities and businesses at various levels. RSU-SSP comprises the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Social Sciences Research Centre, and the Centre for Educational Growth.

RSU-SSP organises its research around three main challenge-based directions: creating healthy societies, ensuring a sustainable environment, and addressing security challenges. The platform fosters transdisciplinary collaboration among researchers from diverse fields such as political science, communication studies, and medical humanities.

2.2.2 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 1 Riga Stradiņš University, Social Sciences Platform – Scores



Overall score

Score 4: very good

The Expert Group finds that the Social Sciences Platform (RSU-SSP) demonstrates a coherent and challenge-driven approach to research in the social sciences, addressing issues related to health, the environment, security, and governance and overall has a good research performance. It is an essential national actor with growing regional and international recognition. Research outputs are of very good quality and societally relevant, but international visibility and theoretical consolidation remain moderate. The unit has established a solid foundation for interdisciplinary and applied research, contributing to Latvia’s scientific and policy landscape through active collaboration with government and international partners.

The economic and social impacts are very good. RSU-SSP plays a significant role in supporting public administration, policy reform, and sustainable economic development in Latvia. Its researchers contribute expertise to ministries, municipalities, businesses, and advisory groups,

influencing legislation and governance. Engagement during COVID-19, work on energy transitions, media literacy, and national security demonstrate consistent and meaningful contributions to society and the economy.

The research environment is good, benefiting from RSU's infrastructure, digital systems, and project management support. Nonetheless, limited permanent positions and high teaching workloads restrict long-term research development. Development potential is good, supported by a clear strategy, structural reforms, and credible ambitions for greater international engagement. Strengthening theoretical foundations, increasing high-impact publications, and expanding international recruitment would enable the platform to evolve from a strong national actor with some international recognition to a well-recognised international player.

The overall score of '4' reflects RSU-SSP's good quality of research, strong national position, clear engagement in European research networks, and realistic potential for further internationalisation.

Quality of Research

Score 4: very good

The quality of research is very good. RSU-SSP produces interdisciplinary and applied research with evident national and regional relevance. The self-assessment report lists over 500 research outputs from the evaluation period, including peer-reviewed articles, monographs, and project reports. Publications appear in journals such as "Global Media Communication", "Journal of Contemporary European Studies," "Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment", "Journal of Baltic Studies" and other Q1 journals as well as in edited volumes published by established academic presses. Projects such as INFORM (Horizon Europe), FOODCITYBOOST (Horizon Europe), and PROMPT (funded by the Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology of the European Commission) demonstrate the ability to combine empirical and conceptual approaches across disciplines. Overall, the scientific output has improved, but it remains average in terms of both quality and quantity. A rather limited number of top publications have appeared in high-quality international journals, and a relatively high share of articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals and conference proceedings are not included in Web of Science or SCOPUS. RSU-SSP staff have attracted an impressive amount of external funding, particularly from the EU; however, these international partnerships could have yielded higher-impact academic outputs.

The institution is very good at producing project-driven and applied research, with publications in Q1 journals. The Expert Group notes that the research orientation is largely towards policy-relevant studies, which meet national needs. The research could display more theoretical depth in order to reach a higher international academic impact. To strengthen research quality, the unit should consolidate its thematic focus, encourage further publications in higher-impact outlets, and enhance its peer-review mechanisms. RSU-SSP is a very strong national player with also solid international recognition whose work would merit to reach a broader audience through publishing in leading international venues.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 3: good

The Expert Group finds that RSU-SSP plays a visible role in advancing interdisciplinary research within political science, law, anthropology, and media studies, and the impact on the scientific discipline is good. Its research has significant societal relevance, and the unit plays a crucial role in policy research in Latvia. Its members contribute to research on environmental governance, Baltic regional security, digital communication, and health policy. The unit co-organises international conferences (e.g., "European Association of Social Anthropologists, Anthropologies of the State network conference"), hosts visiting researchers, and collaborates

in European networks, such as COST Actions and Horizon Europe consortia. However, the unit has yet to develop as a leader of international consortia. The publication output indicates that the scientific impact of RSU-SSP has remained limited.

Reflecting the emphasis on externally funded projects and collaboration with non-academic stakeholders, much of the activity is geared towards applied research and interaction with Latvian stakeholders. This reduces the academic impact RSU-SSP clearly wants to achieve. In its own words, "RSU-SSP is moving away from developing a single strand of performance in favour of being a well-rounded academic centre that recognises the diversity of roles that a modern academic actor needs to play." However, higher-level scientific impact requires that staff can genuinely focus on research. The evidence presented and discussion during the site visit did not articulate how fundamental and applied dimensions are balanced.

Although its scientific impact is growing, the international impact of publications remains moderate. The unit could improve cross-disciplinary coherence, further develop its conceptual frameworks, and long-term comparative studies, in order to enhance its contribution to international scholarship.

Economic impact

Score 4: very good

The Expert Group finds that RSU-SSP's research makes an important contribution to Latvia's economy and governance by providing analytical and regulatory foundations for sustainable development. Research at RSU-SSP is based on regular interaction with industry, companies, ministries, and public sector agencies. RSU-SSP involves these stakeholders in the design of projects and produces applied research for them. Emphasis is on producing data that can be used in designing effective policies and practical solutions. Research results support economic decision-making through projects on renewable energy transitions, agro-food value chains, and energy-market resilience. For example, findings from the *FOODCITYBOOST* and *PROMPT* projects have informed regional and municipal strategies for resource efficiency and circular-economy models.

Collaboration with non-academic partners, including ministries, municipalities, and business associations, takes place on a regular and well-structured basis. The platform's researchers participate in government working groups, provide consultancy to enterprises in the agri-food and environmental sectors, and develop policy briefs for public authorities. Such engagement demonstrates a consistent level of interaction with private and public sectors, as expected from a recognised academic institution.

The Expert Group concludes that RSU-SSP's research is significant for the economy, relevant to national development priorities, and effectively integrated into Latvia's innovation ecosystem through policy support and evidence-based analysis.

Social impact

Score 4: very good

The Expert Group finds that RSU-SSP's research has important and demonstrable social impact in Latvia. Its outputs contribute to national and regional policy reforms and public understanding of key social challenges. The platform's experts have influenced legislative and policy processes in areas such as patient rights, reproductive health, and national security, while also providing training for public servants, journalists, and civil society organisations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, RSU-SSP researchers were actively engaged in advisory groups and communication campaigns, ensuring that social-science evidence informed public health strategies. Other examples include participation in the Council of Experts in

Foreign Policy, collaboration with NATO on defence-education curricula, and contributions to media-literacy and disinformation-resilience programmes. Researchers from RSU-SSP were involved in shaping Latvian legislation on sexual and reproductive health and on the rights of patients. In the field of security, five of the 15 permanent members of the Council of Experts in Foreign Policy are from RSU-SSP and the institution is a partner in an EU project that uses advanced Large Language Models (LLM) to develop innovative methods to counteract misinformation. The RSU-SSP staff appears also regularly in the media, and there is also a commitment to publish findings in Latvian.

The Expert Group concludes that the platform maintains a sustained level of interaction with the public sector and wider society, consistent with expectations for a recognised academic institution. Its research is societally important, contributes to inclusive governance, and strengthens Latvia's democratic and knowledge-based development.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 4: very good

RSU-SSP benefits from RSU's institutional infrastructure, digital resources, and administrative support. The establishment of the Social Sciences Research Centre and the use of English as a working language have improved coordination and international accessibility. Internal support mechanisms include project management assistance, performance bonuses, and training in research ethics and methodology.

Heavy teaching and administrative workloads restrict research time. The Expert Group notes that interdisciplinary collaboration is genuine and that there are strong efforts to further develop deeper integration between disciplines that would further enhance the research environment. Continued investment in long-term staff development, international recruitment, and research leadership training would strengthen sustainability.

Development potential

Score 3: good

The Expert Group finds that RSU-SSP has good development potential based on a clear strategic vision and recent structural reforms. The creation of the Social Sciences Research Centre and advisory councils provides an institutional framework for strategic growth. The unit's leadership demonstrates awareness of both strengths (transdisciplinarity, policy engagement, regional networks) and weaknesses (limited high-impact publications, funding dependency). While the transdisciplinary, challenge-based research organisation has its merits, the lack of a disciplinary foundation contributes to difficulties in recruiting personnel and developing a longer-term academic profile for the institution.

The future plan to increase participation in EU programmes and diversify funding sources is credible. To fully realise its potential, RSU-SSP should articulate a stronger theoretical agenda, prioritise publication in international journals, and strengthen collaboration with foreign universities through joint projects and researcher exchanges. With sustained support, the platform can evolve from a national leader to a recognised regional actor.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

RSU-SSP offers a supportive environment for doctoral training. Doctoral students are actively involved in externally funded projects, gaining practical experience and exposure to interdisciplinary teams. Supervision quality is good, and early-career researchers benefit from RSU's Doctoral School framework. Through involvement in the projects, the PhD students develop collaboration with industry and other stakeholders that may facilitate subsequent employment.

However, the number of fully funded doctoral positions remains low, and international enrolment is limited. The Expert Group recommends expanding international mobility and co-supervision schemes, as well as offering advanced training in qualitative and quantitative research methods, to increase competitiveness.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3)

RSU-SSP's activities are well aligned with Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy. Its work supports RIS3 priorities in knowledge-intensive bioeconomy (research on sustainable food chains and energy transitions), biomedicine and health technologies (projects on patient empowerment and health communication), and ICT (digital governance, AI and misinformation studies). RSU-SSP collaborates both with stakeholders in need of support such as enterprises, NGOs and professional organizations, and with the systems regulating, supporting knowledge transfer and facilitating innovations in these areas. Through social science perspectives, RSU-SSP contributes to the ethical, legal, and societal dimensions of Latvia's digital and green transformations.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The Expert Group finds that RSU-SSP's research contributes directly to Latvia's national policy objectives in science, technology, and innovation. Its interdisciplinary work supports evidence-based policymaking, enhances public sector capacity, and strengthens the rule of law. RSU-SSP staff have close ties with companies, civil society actors, and the public sector, providing advice and information for stakeholders. The applied research has produced tangible results, such as the Urban Labs for Better Health for All in the Baltic Sea Region, where RSU-SSP collaborated with cities across the Baltic Sea region to enhance the provision of health and well-being services.

The platform contributes to national strategies on digital transformation, social cohesion, and sustainability. However, to address Latvia's systemic challenges, particularly internationalisation and human-resource development, RSU-SSP should continue expanding recruitment of young researchers and strengthen collaboration with other RSU faculties and international partners.

Recommendations

- Strengthen publication strategy to increase presence in internationally indexed (Q1/Q2) journals. To boost international academic visibility, the unit should develop a coordinated publication strategy aimed at higher-impact journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus. This could include internal writing workshops and peer-review circles. Establishing a structured internal pre-submission review process, possibly involving external international experts, would help improve manuscript quality before submission. The unit could also organise training on journal selection, open science requirements, and responding to reviewer feedback. Although several initiatives are already in place, developing a strong publication culture is a long-term, continuous process. Sustained attention and systematic monitoring would ensure that these measures translate into a higher proportion of publications in top-tier journals over time.
- Consolidate thematic and theoretical focus to balance applied and fundamental research. A clearer thematic and conceptual focus would allow the unit to build a stronger academic profile and develop original contributions to international scholarship. This could be done by identifying a small number of core themes where RSU-SSP has strong expertise—such as governance, security, health policy, or digital communication—and encouraging researchers to align individual projects with these areas. While the unit has indeed articulated thematic priorities, the current research output does not yet consistently demonstrate a sufficiently coherent theoretical direction within these themes. A stronger consolidation of conceptual frameworks across projects would help transform the existing thematic areas into recognisable research niches with distinctive international visibility. Strengthening the balance between fundamental and applied research would position the

platform not only as a national policy advisor but also as a recognised contributor to academic debates. Although the unit argues that the prevalence of competitive grant funding signals the fundamental nature of its research, such funding alone does not automatically confirm a strong theoretical or conceptual orientation. Further articulation of how fundamental and applied dimensions are balanced, and how they jointly contribute to the unit's academic identity, would therefore strengthen the platform's strategic profile. Thus, the recommendation aims not to duplicate existing strategy but to encourage a deeper and more systematic implementation that translates the stated thematic focus into clear scholarly impact

- Develop a mentoring and leadership programme for early-career researchers with a focus on research leadership and management training. Senior academics or international affiliates could mentor early-career staff on publishing strategies, project leadership, and international networking. Training activities could include proposal-writing workshops, grant-management seminars, and supervision skills. Introducing opportunities to co-lead research groups or work packages within large projects would help early-career scholars gain managerial experience
- Broaden international collaboration through joint doctoral programmes and participation in European projects. Joint doctoral programmes or cotutelle arrangements with universities in Europe would strengthen supervision capacity and attract international students. Such activities would not only diversify funding sources but also enhance the quality and impact of research outputs.

S_2 BA School of Business and Finance

2.2.3 *The unit*

The BA School of Business and Finance (BASBF) is a state-funded applied sciences higher education institution, focusing on social sciences, particularly in business and finance. Founded in 1992 and registered as a scientific institution in 2016, BASBF aims to deliver research-driven education through collaboration with international academic and industry partners. The institution focuses on areas such as green and circular economy, digital finance, strategic resilience, and cybersecurity. The institution is integrated into the University of Latvia's scientific ecosystem and became an academic unit in 2025. BASBF's vision is to be a leading partner in modern finance and business education in the Baltic Sea Region, with strengths in interdisciplinary studies, business links, digital maturity, and sustainability-oriented governance.

BASBF aligns its research strategy with the University of Latvia, focusing on excellence, societal relevance, and international collaboration. Its research is organised around three strategic pillars: sustainable and circular economy, digital finance and innovation, and resilience and cybersecurity.

2.2.4 *Overall observations*

Among the unit faculty, there is a clear understanding of the importance of publishing research in recognised and internationally well-regarded journals (e.g. *Journal of Cleaner Production*). Research collaborations are pursued with both national and international actors, academic and non-academic alike.

The research volume has remained relatively stable with a small annual growth (up to 10 extra papers per year, except in 2020 and 2022) over the evaluation period. The quality of research publications has improved overall, with 40.4% of publications (Elsevier bibliometric analysis data) in Q1 journals. The FWCI for published articles is relatively high (above world average), indicating the scientific relevance and interest in the conducted research. However, since a few papers attract a disproportionately large number of citations, there is an opportunity to learn from these and thereby increase the number of highly cited papers. The average output per FTE is relatively low. The publications are largely in a narrow range of journals, some of which may be viewed as predatory (e.g., *Sustainability*). This suggests an opportunity to review the publication strategy and identify suitable journals to enhance research quality further. The faculty's active attendance at internationally recognised conferences signals willingness and understanding to connect with leading actors in the field.

The unit provides support for doctoral students and the development of junior researchers. The research environment is good, with access to bibliographic resources relevant for the field of study and software programmes for researchers, support for conferences, publications and dissemination activities.

For economic and social impact, the conducted research is relevant, and the faculty is actively engaged in various research dissemination activities. There is further opportunity to expand on such activities in a more strategic manner through the establishment of funded centres or dissemination activities.

Recommendations

The unit's development potential shows strength in several areas, especially sustainable economy. Staff are involved in both national and international grant applications, with several notable successful applications, for example, the Horizon Europe TransScale project. With the integration into the University of Latvia (UL) as an autonomous academic unit, a key challenge for the UL BASBF research staff will be to sufficiently differentiate their expertise and research fields to complement that of the UL faculty. The current research themes (Sustainable and Circular Economy, Digital Finance and Innovation, Resilience and Cybersecurity) are expected to remain relevant in the near future. They are also comprehensive and broad enough to cover most faculty interests, including further developments of research projects in collaboration with UL faculty. The Expert Group recommends:

- Given the integration with UL, national research collaborations should focus on developing that partnership for the next few years. This should provide opportunities for efficiency gains through the sharing of resources and support, as well as achieve critical mass in specific research areas. The BASBF faculty is characterised by a pyramid shape, with a majority being assistant professors and a few associate and full professors. This gives BASBF the opportunity to develop the faculty and retain their expertise for a long time. However, since the covered research themes are broad, it is recommended that these be viewed together with research conducted by the much larger and broader UL faculty so that the efforts are complementary and not duplicated. This will require an ongoing mapping of research activities and developments at both institutions, which should be shared with all faculty for their awareness.
- The research strategy has focused on improving the overall base quality of publications and achieving a balanced output of international and national outlets. This has been quite successful, although the percentage of articles should aim to be significantly higher in Q1 and Q2 than the current 55%, with the exception of articles intentionally targeting Latvian journals or outlets to ensure BASBF research retains both national and local relevance. To raise the standard to the next level will require a different approach, one that is structured and systematic. Such a research strategy will entail several steps, including identifying relevant leading journals for the individual subject, identifying editors and conferences associated with the respective journal, and providing selective and explicit support for faculty targeting those journals. The approach must also be well anchored among the faculty to ensure their support and avoid withdrawal
- A key area to develop is the completion of master's degrees. This has been drastically reduced over the evaluation period (113 down to 34). The integration with UL may provide an opportunity to reverse this trend. Hence, it is recommended that master's students at UL are provided with the necessary information and support to complete their degrees at BASBF. This may also later generate candidates for the doctoral programme, so the potential students' support and experiences should be tracked carefully
- Sufficient resources must be allocated to continue developing the existing collaborations with Latvian and international academic institutions (several of which are very well regarded), ensuring they become structurally embedded and not reliant on relationships driven by individual faculty contacts or specific projects. This may require dedicated funding to support exchanges and shared activities such as research dissemination to the public and attracting research grants.

S_3 Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, University of Latvia

2.2.5 The unit

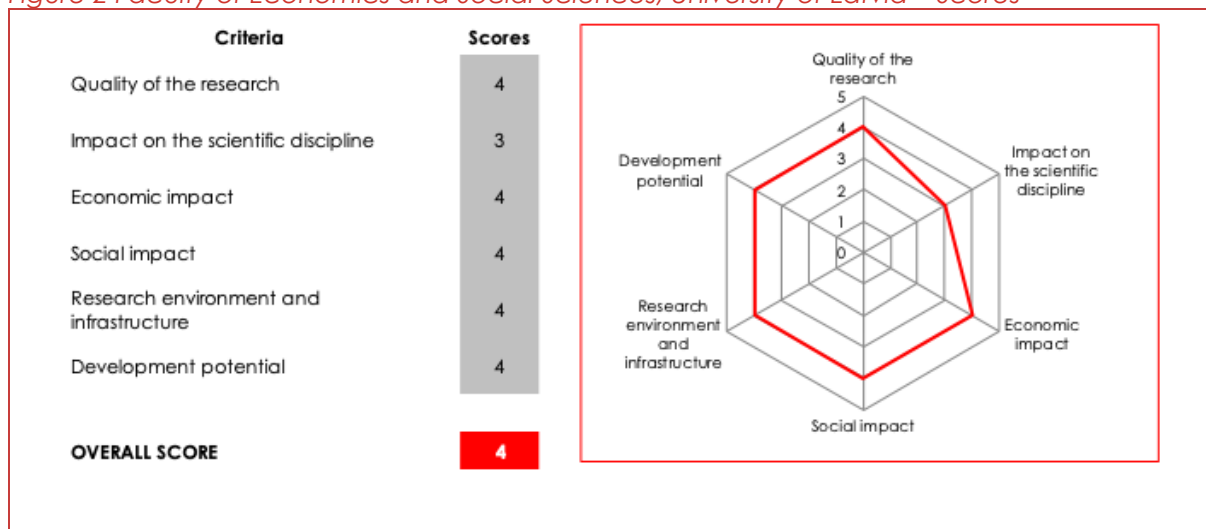
The Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences (FESS) at the University of Latvia is a research entity focusing on social sciences, economics, and business administration. FESS aims to be a leading research hub by integrating social and economic sciences with industry and technology, contributing to scientific excellence and economic development in Latvia and the Baltic region. The faculty's mission includes strengthening research capacity, developing human capital, and expanding international collaboration. FESS is aligned with the University of Latvia's strategy for 2021-2027 and focuses on enhancing scientific excellence through targeted actions.

Research at FESS is organised around its departments and scientific institutes, focusing on areas such as political science, economics, finance, business administration, and communication. The faculty emphasises interdisciplinary and industry-driven research, contributing to Latvia's economy and scientific progress.

2.2.6 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 2 Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, University of Latvia – Scores



Overall score

Score 4: very good

FESS consistently demonstrates a high level of performance, with research quality assessed as very good and supported by strong external funding, participation in major international research infrastructures, and an ERC grant that confirms its international recognition. The unit produces steady and original scientific output; however, publication in higher-ranking journals

should be further strengthened. The impact on the scientific discipline is positive: FESS is an influential actor; however, a strong focus on Latvian stakeholders and regional studies limits its broader international academic visibility and leadership in global consortia.

The economic and social impacts are very positive, with extensive engagement with ministries, industry, and public institutions, as well as contributions to national policy, public communication, and security discourse. The research environment is well-resourced, internationally oriented, and supported by improved administrative services, professional development, and targeted incentives. The development potential is very good, backed by clear strategic targets and ongoing reforms; however, reliance on external project funding remains a structural challenge. With continued internationalisation and a rebalancing of regional and global research output, FESS is well-positioned to strengthen its standing as a leading research centre.

Quality of Research

Score 4: very good

The unit demonstrates a very good quality of research. External funding increased significantly over the evaluation period. FESS is involved in important international research programmes such as the European Social Survey, European Values Survey, and SHARE surveys, and it produces the Human Development Report for Latvia – all of this demonstrates that the unit is recognised by the international social science community as an institution providing high-quality research. It holds an ERC grant, indicating a very good and internationally recognised level of research. The site visit confirmed faculty commitment to producing high-quality research output. The scientific output is steady, good quality and original; however, some of the selected top publications have not appeared in higher-ranking international journals, indicating that there are weaker areas within the overall good performance.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 3: good

The impact on the discipline is good. FESS defines itself as 'a strong Baltic player' and states that a 'key research niche for FESS at UL is the study of Latvia and the broader Baltic region (Baltic studies).' In line with this goal, the majority of publications, regardless of academic discipline, focus on Latvia or the Baltic region. The Expert Group found that the focus is too heavily on interaction with Latvian policy and societal stakeholders, and limits publication in Web of Science or SCOPUS outlets that would provide more impact on the discipline. Also, participation in international research consortia is mainly in a contributor and not an intellectual coordinator role, like developing the key concepts, leading methodology design. The unit has yet to develop as a leader of international consortia. Participation in international conferences is good and with a wide thematic and geographical coverage.

FESS recognises that it should contribute to maintaining Latvian as a language of science, and while this is a worthwhile objective, it also means diverting resources away from international research activities and can limit the international impact.

Economic impact

Score 4: very good

Many of the academic disciplines (sociology, political science, economics) in FESS have a direct and indirect impact on the Latvian economy and competitiveness. FESS is a sought-after research and development partner by stakeholders (e.g., telecommunications companies LMT, Tet, the Ministry of Finance and several others). FESS researchers clearly have active and wide-ranging ties to industrial partners and companies across a variety of sectors, including telecommunications, energy, welfare, public policy, and finance. This collaboration also takes place in the context of projects funded by the Latvian Council of Science and other agencies.

FESS provides regular advice to the ministries and public sector agencies on a wide range of topics (media literacy, insolvency policy, society integration, security, fiscal discipline, etc.). Notably, the unit produces the annual Economic Barometer, a comprehensive tool operational since 2019 that analyses Latvia's macroeconomic data and provides practical policy recommendations.

Social impact

Score 4: very good

FESS researchers produce a lot of policy-relevant information for both decision-makers and the broader public. Regular stakeholders include various ministries, not least the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Defence. FESS produces knowledge that benefits Latvia's societal development, working together with private sector actors (e.g. commercial banks) on issues such as sustainable development, social services, and e-governance. Considering the turbulent security environment, the research by FESS scholars on Russian disinformation, diaspora, and regional security is highly topical and relevant. FESS staff appear regularly as experts in Latvian media. FESS staff are involved in EU networks and INTERREG projects that can help to have a regional social impact. FESS thus produces societally important research and is a sought-after partner by stakeholders.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 4: very good

The research environment is very good with good bibliographic resources, access to the main software programmes (NVivo, SPSS) for staff and a strategy to improve professional services for researchers. In 2024, FESS had five departments and several research institutes, with over 2,800 students and 139 full-time academic and research staff, providing a valuable resource for conducting research. The number of academic staff has remained stable over the past few years. UL has defined nine horizontal research themes to promote interdisciplinary research, and FESS has aligned its priorities effectively with these themes.

UL and FESS have introduced, in recent years, more financial incentives and administrative support for academic staff. This includes a fund for attending international conferences and publishing in high-impact journals, as well as centralised support for and internal evaluation of funding applications and publications. FESS has successfully recruited professors from abroad, demonstrating internationalisation efforts and success.

Development potential

Score 4: very good

FESS clearly has a very good potential to become an even stronger international player. FESS identifies its main targets as increasing the number of high-quality citation publications, tripling the number of awarded doctoral degrees, and increasing international research funding by strengthening partnerships with internationally recognised research institutions. These are all important objectives, and recently implemented administrative reforms will facilitate a higher level of performance.

Yet, some important challenges remain. The base (state) funding is quite limited, meaning that the FESS budget relies strongly on externally funded projects. Due to this budget structure, the FESS is currently too heavily oriented towards interaction with Latvian stakeholders and policymakers. The focus on Baltic studies should be reevaluated, as it is clear that FESS staff have the potential to make a broader international impact.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

FESS already provides a good level of doctoral education. In 2024, the UL Doctoral School was established to coordinate doctoral studies across the university. FESS is responsible for its own doctoral programmes, including their scientific content and selection of PhD students. The salaries of doctoral students are still often funded or complemented by externally funded projects. Through the new doctoral model introduced in 2024, doctoral candidates are employees with social benefits, which is a significant improvement. FESS produced 52 PhD degrees between 2019 and 2024, which is approximately one-third of all doctoral graduates in the social sciences in Latvia. However, the number of new PhD students has been declining in recent years, as is the case with PhD degrees.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

Through its research and partnerships with industry, FESS contributes to Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy areas both directly and indirectly. Economics and business research are relevant for the knowledge-intensive bioeconomy, as well as the smart materials, technologies, and engineering systems. The research at FESS focuses on sustainable development and urban development, both of which are linked to smart energy. Research on e-democracy and e-governance, in turn, benefits the utilisation of information and communication technologies.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

FESS contributes in several ways directly and indirectly to Latvia's scientific and technological development, as well as to its education system and innovation potential. The research conducted at FESS reaches the relevant policymakers in the public sector, while the FESS staff have diverse contacts with smaller and larger companies. There is a significant amount of commissioned research conducted in collaboration with industrial partners.

Recommendations

- The main goal of FESS for the future should be to aim for even higher European and international recognition. This means that the mindset at FESS should be more geared towards research designs where Latvia or the Baltic region is not the main geographical area of study. The unit has the tools and the potential to contribute to research questions covering issues with relevance also in other geographies. Expanding co-authorship with international partners and leveraging participation in European surveys could also support higher-impact outputs. Joint doctoral programmes, staff exchanges, and strategic partnerships with internationally recognised universities would also support this shift.
- FESS should invest resources in attracting international funding, especially from the EU. Involvement in European applications should be systematically encouraged and rewarded. While the outcome of applications is always uncertain, the partnerships established in drafting applications expand international networks, which in turn should further increase publications in higher-ranking international outlets
- The publication strategy should emphasise quality over quantity. There are already financial incentives at FESS for higher-ranking international publications, but from doctoral studies onwards, the target should be to have publications in respected journals and by leading academic publishers. Doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars should be provided with guidance on how to select appropriate journals and leading international conferences

- Interdisciplinary research should be encouraged. However, at the same time, it is essential that FESS continues to offer basic training and conduct research in conventional social science disciplines, such as sociology, economics, and political science, especially since FESS is the largest social science unit in Latvia.
- To further strengthen its socioeconomic impact, FESS could move from strong ad hoc engagement toward a more structured and strategic impact framework by systematically co-designing research agendas with key public and private stakeholders, ensuring that societal needs are embedded from project inception. Establishing formal long-term partnerships (e.g. multi-year cooperation agreements with ministries, municipalities, and industry leaders) and expanding knowledge translation mechanisms, such as policy briefs, practitioner toolkits, targeted training for civil servants, and interactive public dashboards building on tools like the Economic Barometer, would increase the uptake of research outputs. In addition, enhancing impact monitoring (e.g. tracking policy influence, regulatory changes, or social outcomes linked to FESS research) could enable better demonstration of socioeconomic benefits.

S_5 Faculty of Law, University of Latvia

2.2.7 The unit

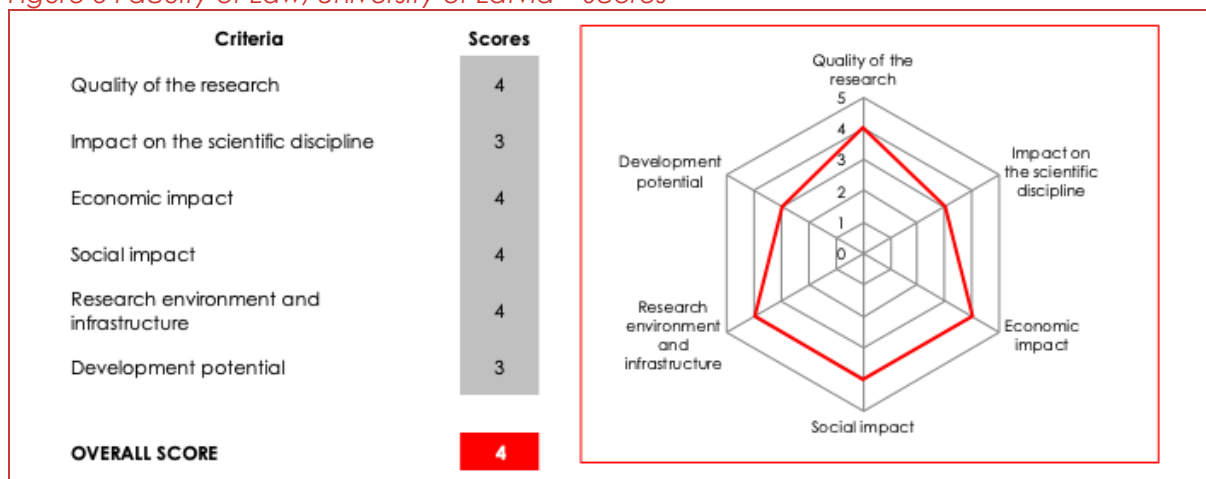
The Faculty of Law at the University of Latvia (FL-UL) focuses on legal studies. Established in 1919, it plays a pivotal role in shaping Latvia's legal system and contributes to the country's legislative processes. The faculty is the largest law faculty in Latvia, with a significant number of staff and students. Its mission is to be a leading national and internationally recognised hub for legal science, advancing Latvia's legal system and democratic institutions. The faculty focuses on fundamental and applied research in various legal areas, including constitutional law, administrative law, and international law, among others.

Research at the Faculty of Law is organised around its five departments and the Legal Science Institute, focusing on both national and international legal issues. The faculty emphasises interdisciplinary research, particularly in modern legal areas like artificial intelligence and digital markets.

2.2.8 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 3 Faculty of Law, University of Latvia – Scores



Overall score

Score 4: very good

Overall, research quality at the Faculty of Law (FL) of the University of Latvia is very good. The Faculty of Law demonstrates consistently very good performance across all evaluated dimensions, combining strong national influence with international visibility. The faculty plays a central role in shaping Latvia's legal system and makes significant contributions to European and comparative legal research. Research quality is high, as evidenced by influential monographs, peer-reviewed publications, and extensive citations in judicial decisions, alongside participation in major European networks and selected Q1 publications. The faculty's impact on legal scholarship is substantial at the national level and increasingly visible internationally.

Economic and social impacts are significant: the faculty's legal expertise plays a decisive role in shaping Latvia's legal system, regulatory frameworks, and public governance, supported by extensive cooperation with ministries, courts, and regulatory bodies. The research environment is well-structured, internationally oriented, and supported by incentives and advisory councils; however, high teaching loads and reliance on national policy-focused work remain significant challenges. The development potential is good, with a clear strategy to expand international

publications, interdisciplinary research, and doctoral recruitment. With continued progress in international leadership, higher-impact publishing, and diversification of research agendas, the faculty is well-positioned to further strengthen its role as a recognised European legal research centre.

Quality of Research

Score 4: very good

The Faculty of Law conducts good-quality and coherent research across all main branches of legal science, including constitutional, criminal, civil, and EU law. Its relevance to Latvia's legal system is unquestionable, and its quality is evidenced by influential monographs and peer-reviewed publications that are widely cited in judicial decisions — for instance, the commentary on Criminal Law, cited over 1,000 times, and the monograph on the Law of Obligations, cited over 600 times. Faculty's research is original, contextually significant, and aligned with international standards, indicating solid research quality. While the faculty must conduct research to address local needs, it has successfully developed comparative and interdisciplinary research themes with international relevance, including data protection, digital technologies, and AI. Internationally, the faculty's research quality is evident through its participation in cross-European networks and publications in Q1 journals (e.g. European Journal of Risk Regulation). Involvement in the European Law Institute and invitations to speak at conferences across Europe further signal very good international recognition.

The faculty combines fundamental and applied research, with monographs and journals (e.g., *Law*, indexed in ERIH+ and Scopus) reflecting theoretical work, while applied projects support legislative reforms and judicial practice. Initiatives such as reCOVvery-LV, DemoMigPro, and CALDER show strong national engagement and practical impact.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 3: good

The faculty's influence on legal scholarship is substantial, and the faculty's contribution to both national and European legal scholarship is significant, sustained, and methodologically diverse. It has been instrumental in developing modern Latvian legal doctrine, with many central concepts in public and private law traced to the research of its academic staff. The faculty's research results are integrated into national law-making, legal education, and court reasoning. Internationally, the faculty is recognised as a regional leader in comparative legal studies, collaborating with Tartu University, Vilnius University, and other European institutions. It coordinates the Baltic Hub of the European Law Institute (ELI), serving as a focal point for Baltic collaboration in European legal research.

Publications in Scopus and Web of Science indexed outlets, regular participation in international conferences, and editorial activity in international journals confirm the faculty's integration into global academic networks. However, the share of high-impact international publications is not very high (only 0.1% of papers are highly cited papers). The practice-oriented approach clearly benefits the Latvian legal system and national policymaking, but it also somewhat reduces the scientific impact of the unit. The majority of research staff are simultaneously engaged in legal practice, and this diverts time and resources from research.

Economic impact

Score 4: very good

The Faculty of Law has a very good economic impact, primarily through its contribution to the functioning, stability, and modernisation of Latvia's legal system - the backbone of a predictable business environment and economic development. The faculty's research indirectly supports Latvia's economic environment by contributing to regulatory stability, the rule of law, and governance. Its academic staff regularly advise ministries (e.g. Ministry of

Justice, Ministry of Economics), municipal authorities, regulators, courts, and professional associations, providing legal expertise that shapes legislation, regulatory frameworks, consumer protection, financial instruments, and digital governance. The preparation of legal opinions for ministries and the Constitutional Court, as well as research projects addressing digital markets and administrative efficiency, strengthen the legal infrastructure underpinning Latvia's innovation and investment frameworks. Research findings have informed legal frameworks for public procurement, data protection, and consumer rights, promoting predictable business conditions.

The faculty's advisory role for public authorities and its influence on economic regulation demonstrate strong relevance to the national innovation and business environment.

Social impact

Score 4: very good

The faculty's societal impact is very good. The unit has profoundly influenced the development of the national legal system, its main reforms, and core legal doctrines. For example, the unit has provided commentaries on the Criminal Law referred to in court practice, legal opinions for the Constitutional Court, and strengthened the capacity of key institutions such as the State Police, Court Administration, etc. It has played a decisive role in advancing human rights, constitutionalism, public health law, and democratic governance in Latvia. Its members frequently act as legal experts before the Constitutional Court and participate in parliamentary and ministerial committees. Over 60 research staff members contributed to more than 40 constitutional cases in recent years.

Faculty research staff contribute to public understanding of law through media engagement (over 800 appearances per year), judicial and NGO training, and outreach programmes such as the "Young Lawyer Academy". Their involvement in law-related outreach activities in secondary schools is grounded in faculty research on constitutional law, human rights, rule of law, and civic education. Research findings are translated into teaching materials to secondary school students, thereby enhancing legal literacy, democratic awareness, and understanding of justice. This constitutes a clear pathway for societal impact, whereby research outputs are disseminated to non-academic audiences and contribute to long-term civic and democratic capacity building. The Expert Group concludes that the faculty's societal contribution to justice, equality, and democracy is strong and sustained.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 4: very good

Research management is well-structured, with coordination through the Vice-Dean for Research and the Institute of Legal Science, supported by incentives such as publication bonuses and mentoring. The International Scientific Advisory Council and the Scientific Advisory Council oversee the unit's work. The faculty benefits from a well-developed institutional infrastructure, including a dedicated legal library and access to international databases such as Westlaw, HeinOnline, and Kluwer. Staff have access to Scopus and WoS databases, and IT support. The research environment is collegial, with early-career researchers and doctoral students integrated through the Doctoral Club and the Institute of Legal Science.

The Expert Group notes the availability of performance-based incentives, financial support for international conferences, and open-access publication policies. While teaching loads remain high, the faculty has implemented support measures to balance academic responsibilities and staff can find time for research.

Development potential

Score 3: good

The faculty's development strategy (2025–2030) is well-defined and realistic. It aims to consolidate its national leadership while strengthening its European and international profile. Priorities include further increasing publications in Q1 journals, broadening participation in EU-funded projects, and expanding research on digital transformation, AI, and environmental law.

The Faculty's capacity to attract doctoral students and international researchers is improving through programmes such as Erasmus+, the Forthem Alliance, and Fulbright. Plans to diversify funding sources and integrate interdisciplinary approaches demonstrate a forward-looking management approach. The Expert Group finds that the Faculty is well-positioned to enhance its global visibility and academic impact over the next decade.

However, to maintain its international impact, the unit must prioritise contributions to the international scientific debate in both long-term planning and everyday implementation. The Expert Group believes that there is still a significant risk that serving local needs may prevail, despite staff commitment to international scholarly relevance. This risk is primarily linked to structural factors, including strong demand for policy-relevant expertise and workload pressures that may limit the time and incentives available for sustained international research collaboration and publication.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The faculty plays a leading role in legal doctoral education in Latvia, ensuring the highest standards. Doctoral studies are supervised by experienced professors, with interdisciplinary and international exposure provided through the University's Doctoral School. The Doctoral School reflects good practices common in European doctoral programmes by combining disciplinary research with transferable skills training, research ethics, and career development. Approximately four doctoral theses are defended annually. The Doctoral Club offers structured mentoring and networking for doctoral candidates and mirrors international good practices that emphasise cohort-building, peer learning, and the integration of early-stage researchers into academic communities.

Doctoral graduates hold significant roles across academia, the judiciary, and the administration. The faculty supports international mobility through Erasmus+ and the Forthem Alliance, inviting external reviewers from other European universities. The involvement of external reviewers from other European universities in thesis evaluation aligns with widely accepted European quality assurance standards and supports international benchmarking of doctoral outcomes. The Expert Group finds that the doctoral framework is strong, sustainable, and aligned with international good practices.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3)

The faculty's research aligns closely with Latvia's RIS3 priorities, particularly in governance, digital transformation, health, and sustainability. Examples include studies on ecological flows in small hydroelectric plants (RIS 3 priority 4), AI and discrimination (RIS 3 priority 5), and the legal framework for remote work within the reCOVVery-LV project. Research contributions on data protection, consumer law, and public administration directly support Latvia's smart specialisation and digital transition objectives. The contribution of legal research conducted at

FL occurs in various ways, such as through examining the current legal regulation, identifying existing problems, and providing solutions.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The faculty's research directly contributes to Latvia's education, justice, and innovation policies. Its outputs support evidence-based law-making, strengthen public institutions, and promote high-quality legal education. The integration of research with teaching ensures that new knowledge informs future generations of lawyers and public servants. The faculty's activities align with national priorities for internationalisation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and societal resilience.

Recommendations

- Continue to strengthen international visibility by encouraging publications in high-impact journals and active leadership in EU projects. To further raise global visibility, the faculty could establish a structured publishing strategy focused on Q1/Q2 journals, including internal writing workshops, pre-submission review by international peers, and incentives for collaborative publishing with high-profile European partners. Hosting thematic conferences or special journal issues on digital or constitutional law could also attract international scholars and strengthen citation impact
- Develop a systematic mentoring programme for early-career researchers to increase grant success and international collaboration. The faculty supports doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers through the Doctoral Club and incentives, but a more formal mentoring structure would help young scholars transition to independent research careers. Senior academics and international affiliates could mentor early-career researchers in grant writing, publication planning, and international networking. Faculty workshops on ERC and Horizon Europe proposal development, internal "mock grant panels," and opportunities to co-lead work packages would build capacity. This approach would help address the challenge of high teaching loads by equipping early-career researchers with the skills and confidence to secure independent funding
- Enhance interdisciplinary research, particularly in digital law, sustainability, and technology regulation. The faculty already works across fields such as data protection, AI, and administrative efficiency, but expanding interdisciplinary projects would further strengthen its international profile. Establishing thematic research groups comprising computer scientists, social scientists, and economists at the University of Latvia would facilitate cross-faculty collaboration in areas such as cybersecurity, law for AI, fintech regulation, and environmental governance. Joint publications, interdisciplinary conferences, or applied legal-tech projects with industry partners could further deepen expertise. Positioning the Faculty as a regional hub for digital and sustainable law would align with European research priorities and attract international collaborators
- Broaden international doctoral recruitment and promote co-supervision (cotutelle) schemes with European partners. This broadening should also apply at the national level by encouraging doctoral students from outside the Faculty of Law. Bringing diversity into doctoral studies is a way to foster more innovative research. Attracting a more diverse doctoral cohort would increase research innovation and strengthen the faculty's global academic network. To further strengthen the international research and doctoral environment, the Expert Group recommends expanding institutional measures aimed at attracting international doctoral candidates. The creation of a structured English-language doctoral programme in law would be a concrete and effective step, complemented by the systematic advertisement of doctoral positions through European platforms such as EURAXESS and the introduction of short-term visiting doctoral and postdoctoral scholarships. Together, these measures would enhance the faculty's visibility, diversity, and integration into the international academic community. Cotutelle agreements with partner universities in the Nordic countries, Germany, and the Baltic states could result in shared supervision,

joint dissertations, and co-authored publications. Encouraging doctoral candidates from other faculties, such as computer science, sociology, or public health, to pursue legal research topics would foster interdisciplinary perspectives and support thematic expansion into technology and sustainability law

- The faculty already uses advisory councils and incentive systems. It could also further formalise internal peer review and research quality assurance mechanisms to ensure consistent excellence across subfields, for example, by applying comparable quality standards and expectations for research outputs in areas such as public law, private law, international law, and interdisciplinary legal studies, ensuring that all subfields meet international benchmarks in publication quality, methodological rigour, and scholarly visibility. This could include mandatory peer review of manuscripts before journal submission, thematic research seminars with international discussants, and annual evaluation of publication outcomes by the Scientific Advisory Council.

Expert Group note on the evaluation of institutions conducting research in law

Law occupies a specific place among the social sciences. It cannot be regarded as an entirely global discipline, as it is intrinsically domestic in nature and closely linked to national legal systems, institutions, and languages. While certain subfields, such as comparative law, international law, or European law, lend themselves to international publication formats, these represent only a limited segment of overall legal research.

Applying generic international standards of research evaluation to law risks overlooking the main scientific outputs and societal contributions of institutions engaged in legal research. Most of the legal scholarship is published in national languages and in journals or monographs that are not indexed in major international databases. Only a very small number of legal journals appear in Scopus, and even among these, only a few are widely read or cited by legal scholars. Notably, many of the most prestigious English-language law journals are not indexed themselves.

Depending on the legal culture of each jurisdiction, monographs, commentaries on codes and legislation, and encyclopedias constitute key vehicles for disseminating legal knowledge and advancing the discipline. These forms of scholarship are often more influential within the legal community than journal articles, as they shape doctrine, jurisprudence, and legislative reform.

This situation also raises a broader concern regarding the reliance on bibliometric tools managed by a small number of commercial providers, such as Elsevier or Clarivate, whose databases do not adequately reflect the diversity of legal scholarship.

Therefore, the Expert Group evaluation, while respecting the overall methodology of this evaluation, has recognised and taken into consideration the specificities of the discipline - including national and regional impact, contribution to the development of legal doctrine and jurisprudence, influence on legislation and legal education, and engagement with public authorities and practitioners.

S_11 Daugavpils University, Research Programme "Social Sciences"

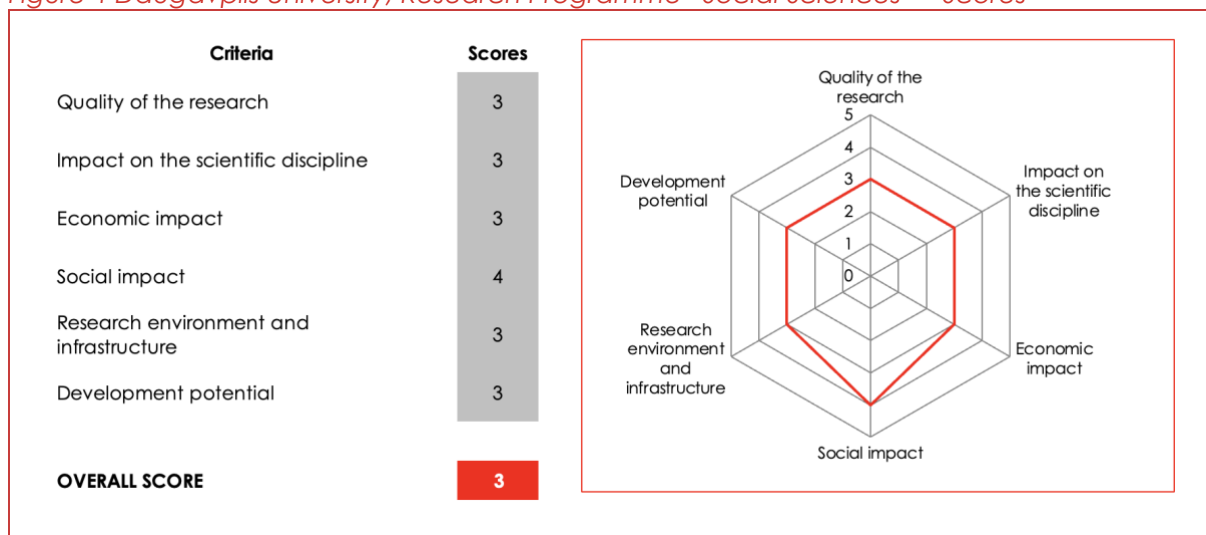
2.2.9 The unit

The Daugavpils University Research Programme "Social Sciences" (RPSS) is a research entity operating within Daugavpils University, focusing on social sciences. The programme aligns with the university's development strategy for 2022-2028, aiming to foster a sustainable future society through international research and contribute to the development of the Latgale region and Latvia. RPSS's mission is to produce high-quality, competitive research in the social sciences, supporting national strategies such as the National Industrial Policy Guidelines and Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy. The programme's research areas include sustainable education, psychosocial well-being, sustainable economics, and public and individual security. It is implemented through four structural units, with funding sourced from the state budget, EU research programmes, and other foundations. The programme is regionally focused, particularly on Eastern Latvia, and aims to address local socio-economic challenges through its research initiatives.

2.2.10 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 4 Daugavpils University, Research Programme "Social Sciences" – Scores



Overall score

Score 3: good

The unit demonstrates good performance across all evaluation dimensions, with notable strengths in regional relevance, applied research, and social impact. Research quality is good, driven particularly by sustainability in education, where the UNESCO Chair and participation in the GUIDE study reflect recognised international competence. Publication output has grown steadily, including Q1 publications; however, many results appear in regional or non-indexed outlets, which limits their wider international visibility. The unit has a significant societal and economic impact in Eastern Latvia, serving as an anchor institution in a low-income region and contributing to local education, labour market development, and social inclusion. Infrastructure is sound and broadly in line with international expectations; however, long-term sustainability is constrained by a reliance on external funding and limited specialised research-support staff. Development potential is good, supported by incentive systems, young researcher grants, and realistic strategic planning. However, to reach the next level of

international competitiveness, greater international collaboration, stronger doctoral pipelines, and higher-impact publishing are needed.

Quality of Research

Score 3: good

The quality of research of the unit is good. The main research areas are sustainable education, psychosocial well-being, sustainable economics and public and individual security, however the strongest area is education research which is because the main profile of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (RPSS) is teacher education (BA and MA and also adult education) and in this capacity the unit is a major and vitally important institution in the region. There is a strong focus in research on sustainability in education and economics in order to contribute to the sustainable development of the Latgale region.

The number of staff members actively engaged in research is relatively small and has decreased slightly (two FTE less at the end of the period compared to the start) overall during the reporting period, as most faculty members focus on educational activities. Despite the relatively small number of academic staff, the unit has produced a substantial number of publications, with 50% falling within the top two quartiles.

The research profile is more applied than basic research, addressing pressing societal issues, related to e.g. security, criminality, ways of promoting the Latvian language among the Russian minority, renewable energy, etc. The unit has its own internal funding system to support diverse topics and thus provides an opportunity for starting new research directions.

The unit holds a UNESCO chair and has secured a good amount of international research funding from COST Actions and Horizon Europe. Participation in the GUIDE-First European cohort study from birth to age 24 is a significant achievement. However, these projects have not widened the international research collaborations and joint publications beyond Baltic and Eastern European countries.

The number of publications has been steadily growing (including Q1 publications), but the outlets are mostly not leading journals (e.g., Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability is a Q2 journal) in any of the disciplines, several items are in handbook chapters with synthetic contributions rather than original research and one-third of the publications appear in outlets not indexed in SCOPUS. The unit has its own Q2 international journal, with a wide international editorial board, and three other journals that are not indexed in SCOPUS but aim to be indexed in the future. Every year, the unit organises an international conference, attracting mostly scholars from the region. Although the unit demonstrates steady publication output and regular participation in international projects and conferences, the visibility and impact of its research remain limited at the global level. Publications are predominantly placed in regional or mid-tier outlets, and international engagement tends to be concentrated within Baltic and Eastern European networks.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 3: good

The unit is a strong national player with some international recognition. In a national comparison, the number of citations and publications in leading journals is satisfactory, but internationally, it remains limited. Participation in major non-regional international conferences of the different disciplines is limited. The focus is on national conferences, self-organised international conferences and conferences in neighbouring countries. Faculty members are not typically members of leading professional associations, which reduces their visibility and opportunities for networking or attracting visiting researchers. The existing research, however,

has significant implications both locally and internationally, with some recognition at the regional and national levels. One field is especially impactful both nationally and internationally, namely, sustainability in education. This is supported by the UNESCO Chair in this area and by publications in internationally indexed journals such as *Discover Sustainability* and the *British Journal of Religious Education*.

Economic impact

Score 3: good

There is a strong connection between the university and local actors in the economic life, and a good number of graduates are joining local enterprises (e.g. LLC Protams, Rols, Daugmeteks and others). University students are offered practice opportunities, and they can also be a source of a highly educated workforce in the region for the future. An ESF project aiming to improve the capacity of staff, provided internships in companies, opening up more research collaboration opportunities.

A new Research and Business Centre "REBUS" was established to strengthen the cooperation with the business sector. There are research topics that have the potential to contribute to economic progress/inform policies (economic security, green economy, renewable energy, green technology, digitalisation in higher education/business sector, artificial intelligence, labour market policy), and there are market/business-related research topics, for example, on consumer behaviour and choices. Achieving a direct impact is challenging, given that this is a social science unit; however, an indirect impact is evident. Among the PhD students, there are those who are involved in the local business life, and in this way, they represent a direct connection with the local economy.

Social impact

Score 4: very good

The unit addresses social issues and topics that are highly relevant to the municipality and Eastern Latvia, and the social impact of its research is very strong. Research is related to pressing issues like unemployment and low-income groups, criminality, public security, and border guards (the EU Eastern border), and findings inform decision-making. In the field of education, the unit contributes to national recommendations for promoting literacy in pre-school. The setting of Daugavpils University within an area with a high concentration of ethnic minorities, particularly Russians, results in a focus on research on education and integration within the region, in collaboration with schools at all levels of education. Urban-rural migration and the exodus of young people mean that this institution serves as a vital educational, social, and economic anchor in the region. In general, the unit is surrounded by a low-income population with high levels of deprivation, which is why the youth development initiative is important.

To reach the citizens, a great variety of dissemination modes are applied: university for seniors (third-generation citizens), research festivals, and science competitions. The significance of the unit's activity, disseminating the latest scientific knowledge to the public, is proven by thousands of participants in the last Researchers' Night organised by the university and the unit. There is a strong social media presence (podcasts, blogs, etc.). This indicates a capacity to promote civic interest in science.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 3: *good*

The research environment and infrastructure are good and consistent with international standards for a modern social sciences research institution. The unit has an incentive system to increase the number and quality of publications, and it is effective because, both in terms of their quality and quantity, the publications have increased and improved. There is assistance available to improve English language competencies and proofreading skills as well. Databases are available for researchers, and the necessary equipment is also provided for technically up-to-date higher education and research. The unit benefits from centralised university-wide support systems, including administrative, IT, and financial services. Researchers have access to a wide range of digital tools, such as SPSS, NVivo, GIS, and online data-visualisation platforms, as well as international databases like Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCO, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect.

Despite the overall strong infrastructure, ensuring the long-term research support capacity remains a challenge, particularly with regard to planning beyond individual project cycles. Additionally, dedicated technical and administrative research-support staffing, such as data management specialists and grant officers, remains limited compared to international best practices, constraining the efficiency of large-scale and interdisciplinary project implementation. In many internationally competitive institutions, such roles are embedded within research units or shared centrally to support proposal preparation, financial management, reporting, and data governance, thereby enabling researchers to focus on scientific work and facilitating participation in complex collaborative projects.

Development potential

Score 3: *good*

The unit has a good developmental potential. As a result of the new incentive policy, introduced after the previous evaluation, there has been a steady increase in Q1 and SCOPUS-indexed publications. The internal grant system supporting young faculty and student research projects (student innovation grant) is also a promising initiative. The SWOT analysis demonstrates a realistic consideration of both strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, which serves as the basis for developing more elaborate strategies to address the weaknesses. Education is a strong subject with a UNESCO chair having been established.

The unit contributes to the professional development of its staff in various areas, including language competence, publication, and e-learning. Development remains vulnerable due to its structural dependence on externally funded projects and constrained base funding, which limits long-term staff stability and strategic risk-taking. In addition, leadership in international consortia is still emerging rather than consistent, indicating a need for sustained investment in grant preparation capacity, the recruitment of experienced researchers, and stronger doctoral pipelines.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The unit already provides a good level of doctoral education. The doctoral level education is guided by four doctoral councils offering doctoral education in all existing disciplines (psychology, law, economics, and education). The number of doctoral students is relatively low for four programmes (seven graduates in the evaluation period), and postdoctoral positions are not always filled. The doctoral students have a variety of motivations for pursuing doctoral studies, but the main interest is not in pursuing an academic career, which means that there is a greater chance that they will drop out during the process. The doctoral students have a variety of motivations for pursuing doctoral studies, and many are oriented towards

professional or applied careers outside academia. As a result, the doctoral programmes currently play a limited role in contributing to the renewal of the academic workforce within the unit. This, combined with the relatively low number of doctoral students and unfilled postdoctoral positions, poses a challenge for sustaining a long-term research pipeline.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

The unit's research agenda is well aligned with Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy, particularly in areas such as digital transformation, governance innovations, social well-being, sustainability, and public-sector modernisation. Projects addressing e-governance, digital markets, data protection, and social innovation contribute directly to RIS3 priorities of modern public administration and digital competitiveness. Collaboration with ministries, municipalities, and regulatory agencies ensures that research findings are effectively translated into policies and services, supporting evidence-based decision-making and promoting economic development.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The unit contributes to the state scientific and technological development in many ways. As sustainability is a major focus in both educational and economic research areas, researchers are contributing new knowledge and understanding relevant to Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy. There is an UNESCO chair of sustainability, as well as an international journal devoted to publishing new research results on sustainability from an educational perspective. Interdisciplinary research on renewable energy and energy security aligns with these goals.

Recommendations

- Increase international visibility: participation in the new Horizon project (Growing Up in Digital Europe Preparation Phase) provides an excellent opportunity to gain visibility in the international scene and initiate joint research with scholars beyond the Baltic region. International visibility can be increased by supporting international conference participation, strategically targeting leading international conferences in the field, and increasing the number of visiting professors and researchers. Although research output is improving and Q1 publications are emerging, many articles still appear in regional or non-indexed outlets, limiting international visibility. The unit should implement a publication support strategy, including internal peer review and mentoring on journal selection
- In addition to the existing Q2 journal, the other three journals of the unit should aim to be indexed in SCOPUS
- The unit's infrastructure is solid, but long-term sustainability is limited by reliance on project-based funding and a lack of dedicated research-support staff. Hiring or designating grant officers, data specialists, and administrative assistants would improve efficiency in proposal development, reporting, and international project coordination. Developing a long-term funding strategy—combining state funding, international programmes, and industry collaboration—would support stable staffing and enable strategic growth rather than project-to-project survival
- With the help of the new legislation, elaborate a strategy to attract PhD students who are interested in pursuing an academic career. A thorough analysis would be necessary to understand dropouts, and based on that, a support system should be developed that ensures doctoral students who start their education stay in the system and can overcome obstacles to complete their studies with a degree. An incentive system could also be applied for supervisors, so that they get a financial reward when their doctoral student successfully defends

- More interdisciplinary research could be initiated, given that education, psychology, economics, and law experts are working in the same unit. Additionally, innovative interdisciplinary projects that address local concerns (i.e., security, majority-minority issues/tensions) may also attract more state funding.

S_14 Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management of Riga Technical University

2.2.11 The unit

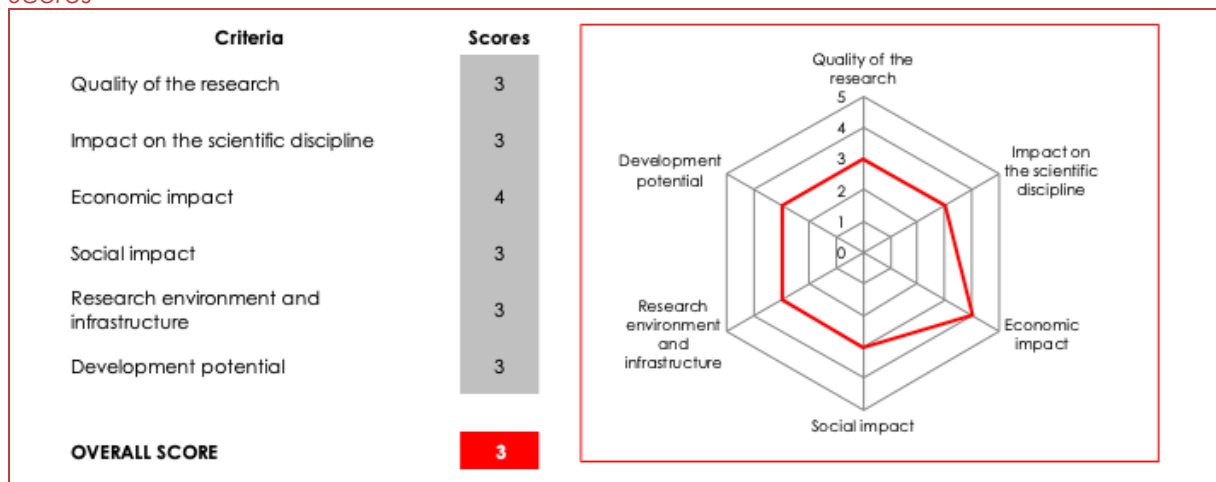
The Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management (FEEM) at Riga Technical University is a research centre specialising in business dynamics and integrative security. Within Business Dynamics, research themes include behavioural dynamics, data analytics, organisational dynamics, financial dynamics, innovation and technological transformation, and societal and educational dynamics. Integrative Security focuses on societal security, organisational security, economic security, sustainable urban-regional resilience, and supply chain security.

Recent structural changes include the consolidation of five institutes into two: the Institute of Economics and Business and the Institute of Governance and Security. The vision of FEEM is to be an internationally recognised centre of excellence in research and education, impacting both national and international spheres. The faculty aims to renew scientific personnel, expand research projects, promote sustainable innovation, and enhance research cooperation.

2.2.12 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 5 Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management of Riga Technical University – Scores



Overall score

Score 3: good

FEEM demonstrates good overall performance, with a clear applied research profile, strong relevance to industry, and improving scientific output. Research quality is solid, and publication in Q1–Q2 journals is increasing; however, a substantial share of outputs still appears in non-indexed or lower-impact venues, which limits international visibility. The unit has secured competitive funding and participates in Horizon Europe and other international projects, typically as a partner rather than a leader, and its citation impact remains below the global average. Economic and societal contributions are very strong, supported by extensive collaboration with businesses, public agencies, and local stakeholders, as well as the Innovation Lab and spin-out activities. The research environment is well-equipped and collegial, yet high teaching loads and dependence on short-term external funding constrain research capacity and long-term planning. The development potential is good, with realistic strategic goals and a strong thematic focus on digital transformation and security. However,

to reach the next performance level, greater international leadership, a stronger doctoral pipeline are needed.

Quality of Research

Score 3: good

The quality of research at the unit is good. The research is primarily of a technical and applied nature, which aligns with the University's remit. FEEM is built around two institutes (the Institute of Economics and Business and the Institute of Governance and Security). The research is divided into groups and research areas, with individual faculty members assigned based on their research expertise. This helps ensure there is a critical mass, with several researchers exploring a problem from different angles. Hence, the research is interdisciplinary in that it seeks to explore and resolve identified problems rather than being managed within preset disciplinary fields. The approach should strengthen research relevance, although it may impact the ability to publish the research unless care is taken regarding journal preferences for methods, data specifics, and other factors.

There is support for research and innovation activities funded by the RTU Research and Innovation Development Fund, including events, databases, software, materials, and publication fees. FEEM is funded through a combination of state budget allocations, private funding, international and national projects and research grants. Research grants have been won annually. This indicates the strength and competitiveness of the scientific expertise available among the staff but Expert Group observed an overly narrow research scope (and hence a reliance on available research calls) or a reliance on a few active applicants.

The faculty is pursuing both relevance and quality in its research. There are specific and appropriate key performance indicators for all research areas, covering funding, student numbers and academic outputs. This supports steering of FEEM activities in accordance with the set strategic plan.

Research quality has been improving, with an increase in journal publications in Q1 and Q2 Scopus rankings. Despite an increasing number of publications, many outputs still appear in non-indexed or lower-impact journals, which limits international visibility and citation potential. In addition, the relatively small number of academic staff primarily dedicated to research, combined with limited high-impact international collaborations, reduces the unit's ability to produce internationally competitive, theory-driven scientific contributions.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 3: good

There has been an increase in publications and research grant funding, especially framework programme funding, which suggests a good research presence. Funding is both national and international (e.g. project from the EU Horizon programme, several COST actions). Informal networks are developed and retained through research project collaborations both in Europe and globally, conference attendance and faculty exchanges, all of which are actively supported. However, FEEM staff are mainly partners in international projects rather than leaders. In terms of publications and their impact on the discipline, FWCI falls below the world average, indicating a limited impact on the field. There are also substantial levels of staff academic stewardship, e.g. journal editorial board roles, although this has more of a national scope than an international one.

Economic impact

Score 4: very good

The economic impact of the research at FEEM is very good, with staff involvement in local and regional projects that are applied in nature and are likely to lead to economic impact in the short, medium, and long term. The self-evaluation report and site visit highlighted spin-out projects and the attraction of foreign students, who contribute significantly to the local economy (38% of all students), with FEEM drawing students from around the world. Many lecturers are professionals from industry, which strengthens the application and relevance of the unit's work. The Innovation Lab encourages students to produce novel ideas that can later be brought to market.

The faculty has extensive collaborations with industry (e.g., contribution to the development of new products for company MILZU!, market research for LDZ CARGO and others) and public organisations, as well as numerous research dissemination activities for the public. There are labs supporting the application of research. The faculty and the university have significant industry collaborations that are involved in the research and its dissemination. For example, the unit co-created a joint marketing strategy and development of business models for the company Essa, market research for LDZ Cargo and others. This also has a direct and significant impact on strengthening the national and local economy.

Social impact

Score 3: good

The research areas covered by the two main FEEM research themes are well-suited for developing a society, as they explore relevant and important challenges faced in terms of the application of new technologies, social and economic security, and urban resilience issues. Research into societal problems is conducted in close collaboration with other RTU faculties, including those focused on energy, mobility, and urbanisation, among others. The social impact encompasses projects in coastal areas and initiatives focused on the circular economy. There is strong regional co-operation and relationships with policy and economic actors. For example, the unit developed recommendations on green transitions for the Employers Confederation of Latvia and others. There is also evidence of educational impact in some of the research initiatives - research directly feeding into curricula and doctoral training. International comparative research on entrepreneurial intentions (SEAS Project) informed a completed PhD thesis and was explicitly used to improve business education curricula at RTU and partner universities, demonstrating a direct research-education feedback loop.

The unit implements various dissemination activities by informing about its research, but there is no systematic monitoring or evaluation of how research-based interventions influence policy, behaviour change, or long-term societal outcomes, which makes it difficult to demonstrate broader impact. Systematic follow-up on these activities would provide useful insights into what audiences to target.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 3: good

The research environment and infrastructure are good. The unit has defined specific and appropriate key performance indicators for all research areas, covering funding, student numbers and academic output. This supports steering of FEEM activities in accordance with the set strategic plan.

Bibliographic services and access to important software programs are available, which should help to underpin research efforts. The infrastructure is well-developed, with space available for

labs, experiments, and office space. Collaborations between departments and faculties within RTU are supported and encouraged. There is mentoring and support available for the development of project proposals, including application writing and coordination of partnerships. There is also support available to doctoral students (e.g. conference participation and other), as well as financing for conference attendance and other dissemination activities.

A weakness of the research environment is that the teaching load remains very high, and the faculty does not have a plan in place to develop and support a more balanced allocation of teaching and research time.

Development potential

Score 3: good

The unit has identified key areas for expansion, building on its existing strengths in applied and technical research, and leveraging its position in the Latvian research landscape. The development plans are well set out, and there is a clear set of goals for the future that are also realisable. The development potential of FEEM is, therefore, good.

In terms of topics, the current focus on the ongoing digital transformation and broader security issues is expected to increase in relevance and importance. The strong technological element of the conducted research is also beneficial, as it helps explore problems in depth and potentially resolve issues beyond mere description. The access to labs and experimental environments helps realise this.

The unit's development is vulnerable due to structural dependence on externally funded projects and limited stable income for research, which restricts long-term staffing, strategic planning, and investment in new research directions. Moreover, leadership in major international consortia is still emerging rather than established, indicating a need for stronger grant preparation capacity, targeted recruitment of experienced researchers, and a more robust doctoral pipeline to sustain future growth.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

Although there is an increasing (albeit small) number of people defending their doctoral theses (an increase from 1 in 2019 to 7 in 2024), there is a decline in the number of doctoral students. The current requirement for a PhD is to have six published articles, which may encourage students to target lower-quality journals with faster turnaround times. The requirement does include published conference proceedings and local publications, which may help increase the number of publications; however, there should be a greater focus on disseminating high-quality research in highly regarded outlets, even if that means publishing fewer articles in total. Interviews with doctoral students during the site visit highlighted the problematic nature of this requirement, as students often rush to publish unfinished work in low-quality or local conference proceedings, sometimes even in their first year of studies. This does not encourage robust and high-quality research.

There are sufficient resources to manage supervision, support doctoral students financially and practically, and mechanisms to ensure that they are effectively integrated into the faculty's research. Some PhD students are themselves employers and entrepreneurs, integrating research into their economic activities.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

This unit has an excellent potential to contribute to the Smart Specialisation Strategy, as many of its projects involve digital technology, and there are initiatives to harness staff and student creativity in solving technological problems and making digital advances. Research projects such as the *Roadmap for the Development of E-Government in Latvia* and studies on digital

transformation, AI, and remote work directly support the digitalisation of public administration and private sector processes, aligning with RIS3 objectives on smart governance and ICT-enabled productivity.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

The FEEM is focused on technology and business development. The unit has several successful examples, including a student innovation lab where several ideas were convincingly demonstrated (e.g., the FEEM works closely with a number of industry partners, who also send representatives to participate in teaching on some of the courses). FEEM attract a large number of international students and is involved in international projects. The close links between FEEM and more technical faculties were apparent, with much research presented being truly interdisciplinary and incorporating different departments and centres, including the engineering departments.

Recommendations

- Although publication output is improving, many articles continue to appear in non-indexed or lower-impact journals, limiting the international reach of FEEM's research. The faculty should formalise a publication strategy that includes internal peer review and training in journal selection. A system is needed that supports publications in internationally leading journals through a structured and targeted approach. This entails identifying journal preferences, informal screening procedures (e.g., conferences attended by editors), methods and data used, etc., and then ensuring faculty are supported as they follow the guidelines. The unit could actively build co-authorship teams with international partners - especially those from recently secured Horizon Europe or COST projects – this might improve citation impact and strengthen disciplinary visibility
- The evaluation notes that heavy teaching duties limit the time available for research and hinder staff's ability to produce internationally competitive outputs. FEEM should develop a transparent workload model that allocates protected research time, particularly for those leading major projects or producing high-impact publications. This could be complemented by hiring additional teaching-focused staff or leveraging industry professionals to cover selected courses, thereby freeing researchers to focus on competitive grant preparation and publication
- Assess the external clarity and strategic alignment of the FEEM name. The Expert Group observes a potential misalignment between the FEEM name and its current research activities, particularly with regard to engineering. Clarifying the FEEM's name, if deemed strategically appropriate, could help better communicate its technological and applied research profile to external stakeholders
- The unit needs to support and encourage the recruitment of doctoral students. Given its technology-driven research and excellent links with industry, these are the sorts of projects that would attract particular students both nationally and internationally
- Given the expertise among the staff, FEEM should seek to take a leading role in developing international research projects, such as those in Horizon Europe, rather than merely partnering on them. This would help to increase research funding and improve international visibility of the research.

S_15 Riga Technical University Liepaja Academy

2.2.13 The unit

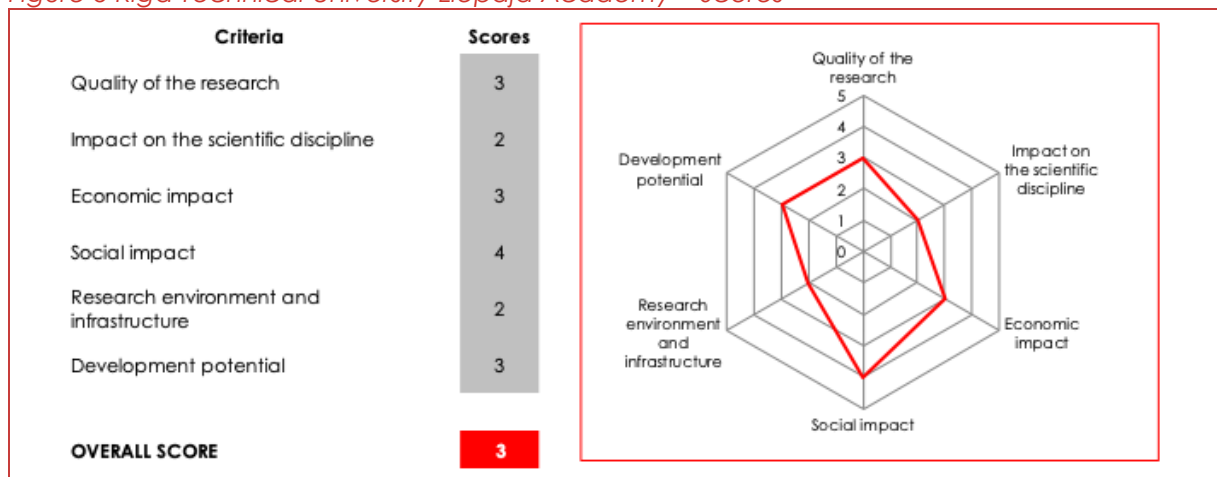
The Riga Technical University Liepaja Academy (RTULA) is a research institution that focuses on the fields of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts, and Engineering and Technology, with a primary emphasis on Social Sciences and Educational Sciences. Recently, RTULA has undergone structural changes, integrating Liepaja University into the Riga Technical University ecosystem as a separate unit. The mission of RTULA is to achieve international recognition as a regional leader in interdisciplinary scientific research, focusing on areas such as Educational Sciences, Languages and Literature, Art, Computer and Information Sciences, and Environmental Engineering. The institution aims to develop high-quality studies, research, and innovations, contributing to regional and national development through participation in research programmes and promoting technology transfer. RTULA is based in Liepaja, Latvia, and aligns its activities with national and international research strategies, fostering collaborations with various stakeholders to enhance societal development and sustainability in the region and beyond.

RTULA organises its research around three strategic directions: Education and governance excellence, language, culture and new media arts, and information and environmental technologies for sustainable development. The institution emphasises interdisciplinary research, integrating fields such as Languages and Literature, Environmental Engineering, Computer and Information Sciences, and Art.

2.2.14 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 6 Riga Technical University Liepaja Academy – Scores



Overall score

Score 3: good

RTULA demonstrates a good level of performance overall, with strong regional relevance, a respected role in teacher education, and clear social impact, particularly in educational development and cultural heritage. Research quality is solid, though uneven across fields, with strengths in Educational Sciences but less clarity regarding performance in Arts and Engineering, and limited success in securing competitive EU research grants. Outputs include some Q1 publications and applied results; however, citation rates remain low, and many publications appear in Latvian, which constrains their broader international influence.

Research infrastructure has been strengthened through EU-funded improvements, yet parts of it remain outdated and reliant on project-based renewal, and the limited recruitment of international scholars restricts research capacity. Economic and societal contributions are visible locally, but their national-level influence is modest, and the impact is diffuse rather than strategic.

Development potential is good, particularly through integration with RTU, which could expand interdisciplinary collaboration and improve access to research support systems; however, organisational challenges, specifically difficulties in recruiting international academic staff, uneven research support capacity, reliance on short-term and project-based funding for infrastructure renewal, and reductions in staffing, pose significant risks to realising this potential.

Quality of Research

Score 3: good

RTULA has a long and respected tradition as an institution providing teacher education and other forms of professional education for the region. In terms of its research, it is difficult to judge improvement over the review period because the institution's research focus has shifted. In the last review, Liepaja University made three separate submissions – social sciences, humanities and engineering. On this occasion, following integration with RTU, the unit made a single submission covering all three areas. The unit now claims to be covering the following topics: 1. Social Sciences, 2. Humanities and arts and 3. Engineering and Technology. In the face of this diversity, the unit places a great deal of emphasis on interdisciplinarity. However, there was only strong evidence for this in a limited number of research areas. Nevertheless, in their core field of Social Sciences, and especially in Educational Sciences, there is evidence of some good quality work.

In terms of competitively won external funding, there is evidence that RTULA has been reasonably successful over the review period; however, it was challenging to understand which parts of their portfolio attracted which funding. Significant structural funding has been won from the European Union, and there is also evidence of funding from private sources. However, the unit has been far less successful in winning competitive EU research grants.

In terms of outputs, the RTULA has performed moderately well, though a large percentage of its output is in the Latvian language. The unit reports a reasonable number of articles in Q1 Scopus journals (some 20% of their publications), though citation rates are poor. The unit also seems to be reasonably active in producing non-peer-reviewed articles and monographs, as well as more popular outputs. There is evidence of the commercialisation of research findings. The unit also organises conferences, art exhibitions, and provides policy advice, both locally and regionally. However, once again, it was hard to judge which parts of their portfolio were most productive - Educational Sciences, Arts, or Engineering and Technology.

Overall, the Expert Group considered the research performance of the unit to be 'good'; RTULA is a strong national player with improving international recognition.

The impact of the research on the field of science

Score 2: adequate

As noted above, RTULA has a moderate profile of outputs in high-impact journals, though their citation rates are weak; the quality of the full-text papers submitted for evaluation was variable. Researchers are moderately well networked internationally and within Latvia. The professors and leading researchers are active participants in international learned societies, and 26% of their publications involve international collaborations, while 60% involve national collaborations. Academic staff also participate in several international networks, including the EERA and ECER conferences. The fact that they are active in other forms of publications also strengthens their potential for academic impact. From the evidence provided, the Expert

Group concluded that at present, the unit's primary sphere of research influence was within Latvia itself, and to a lesser extent, the Baltic region.

Overall, the Expert Group considered RTULA to be a satisfactory national player and the unit's position within the international scientific community is still evolving.

Economic impact of the research

Score 3: good

The entity's research does have some economic impact within its region. It provides business plan evaluation to the local business incubator. Engineering researchers have implemented two projects to support the technology development of CEMS systems. There is evidence of good collaboration with local businesses, with contributions to fields such as smart manufacturing, digitalisation, energy efficiency, and sustainable practices, including the unit's innovative research with red algae.

Much of the outreach activity focuses on accessibility, education, and cultural engagement, but there is limited indication that these activities have achieved national-level influence or sustained structural change, making the current impact more diffuse than strategic.

The social impact of the research

Score 4: very good

RTULA research has a very good social impact. At the most basic level, the Academy makes a significant contribution to the region by providing higher education, which is essential for regional and state development. It is particularly significant in the area of education. There is a strong connection with local schools, with RTULA graduates representing a significant proportion of teachers in the region. In addition, through its collaborative research with schools, the unit contributes directly to the quality of educational provision itself. However, given the strengths of these links, the Expert Group were of the view that this aspect of the unit's research could be developed further in future years. During the review period, RTULA has also helped to foster national identity and community engagement through projects on Latvian language, literature, and cultural heritage, integrating technologies and new media art. In addition, research on digital preservation and cultural analytics has enriched public understanding of Latvia's history, cultural heritage and identity and the unit has contributed to the understanding of the region where it operates.

The research environment and infrastructure

Score 2: adequate

The physical research environment is well-equipped, with laboratories that include a vocal/speech analysis laboratory, providing space for interdisciplinary research. During the review period, library facilities and ICT support have been strengthened. The unit also has an Art Research Lab.

The academic staff count is small, and the staff have significant teaching responsibilities, leaving less time for research. In terms of research support for academic staff, RTULA has been supported by funding secured from the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund to strengthen academic staffing, attract external financing by investing in human resources and infrastructure, and support postdoctoral research. However, the unit still faces serious challenges in recruiting international academics either as visitors or to permanent posts. Specialised training for academic research staff has been provided to improve and strengthen leadership and collaboration skills in the industry, along with workshops designed to enhance pedagogy and English language skills. However, more work, particularly on English language skills, is needed.

Although the research infrastructure includes several specialised labs and the integration into RTU has improved access to databases and equipment, parts of the infrastructure remain outdated (e.g., no specialised education research labs) or rely on project-based renewal, such as the closure of the LiePA publishing office and the need to modernise technical equipment for non-STEM fields.

Overall, therefore, the Expert Group concluded RTULA is a satisfactory national player in terms of research environment and infrastructure.

The development potential of the institution

Score 3: *good*

RTULA has strong aspirations for its future development. They see most of their potential in the field of Social Sciences and Humanities and ICT, and anticipate that these will be strengthened by joining RTU. It is also argued that Engineering and Technology (ET) has the potential to become a new strong research direction, supported by the Liepaja Sustainable Industry Hub and RTU, with a focus on green energy, smart production, and innovations. Their plans for achieving these objectives include strengthening their academic groups, increasing the impact and quality of their research, supporting career development and international networks and increasing collaboration with local and regional industries. Overall, they see their future as having fewer but better-paid academic staff.

Their plans for the future are therefore clear. Whether they are able to realise them will depend to a considerable extent on the success of their amalgamation with RTU. Recently introduced changes as a result of the amalgamation (e.g. the appointment of a vice-rector of science, the establishment of a research ethics committee, regular performance evaluation, etc.) demonstrate a clear commitment to increasing the unit's scientific output. However, this has been accompanied by a significant reduction in the units' FTE staffing levels.

In principle, there is considerable potential for productive collaboration between the two bodies. Being part of a bigger institution may provide advantages in a number of ways: helping to attract more international funding and more foreign researchers; making more interdisciplinary collaboration possible; and opening up more research areas. However, the Expert Group were not convinced that the current structure, which combines Engineering and Technology with Social Sciences, will, in the medium term, be the most effective organisational framework for achieving the unit's potential.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

In their self-assessment report, RTULA give a range of examples of their alignment to the Smart Specialisation Strategy. These include collaboration with local businesses to develop sustainable urban planning solutions and enhance renewable energy technologies, driving ICT development and digital transformation, promoting the knowledge base for activities in a complex society, and developing solutions for improving the education system. Overall, the entity therefore seems to be making a satisfactory contribution. The self-evaluation does not clearly demonstrate how research outputs are systematically linked to RIS3 priorities or embedded in national innovation ecosystems, making the alignment more implicit than strategic.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

There is evidence that RTULA does contribute to the achievement of state goals for scientific and technological development: it contributes to the growth of capital; it is focused on developing new knowledge relevant to current economic and societal challenges; it

demonstrates a clear commitment to the Open Science Strategy and through its focus on national culture and language it may also be able to strengthen the next generation's motivation to stay in the country and counterbalance the increasing emigration of highly educated young people after graduation. Despite these obvious strengths, in the Expert Groups' view, the unit's contribution in each of these areas could be further enhanced if there were greater clarity in the unit's overall focus.

Comments on the potential of the institute to offer doctoral studies

RTULA already has a strong doctoral programme and a relatively successful rate of completions. A total of 49 doctoral students enrolled during the review period, with 19 having completed. The unit is part of collaborative arrangements with other universities across Latvia for doctoral provision. It offers three-year study programmes in 'Educational Sciences' with Latvia University, Daugavpils University (DU), Rezekne Academy of Technologies, 'Language and Literature Studies' with DU, Ventspils University of Applied Sciences, and 'Media Art and Creative Technologies' with RISEBA University of Applied Sciences. Additionally, a four-year doctoral study programme is available in 'E-study technologies and management'. Since integrating with RTU, doctoral study programmes are included in the RTU Doctoral School, which offers various seminars and workshops on transferable skills available to doctoral students, supervisors, and postdoctoral researchers. During the field visit, doctoral students spoke convincingly of a strongly supportive environment for their studies. Overall, the Expert Group concluded that RTULA's doctoral work is good. It is anticipated that amalgamation with RTU should provide opportunities to strengthen its doctoral provision even further.

Recommendations

RTULA have set out an ambitious set of goals for their future development, which the Expert Group endorses, though much will depend on the success of their amalgamation with RTU. It therefore makes the following recommendations:

- In light of the amalgamation, the unit needs to review its current strategy of combining Engineering, Technology, and Social Science into a single unit. The Expert Group remained sceptical that this was the best strategy to support future research in either of these key areas. The Expert Group were of the view that, given the excellent relationships the unit has with the public education institutions in the region, there is considerable potential for increased educational research. Future research could, for example, include joint pedagogical projects, action research, learning studies, and the mental health of teachers and students. All such studies could attract international funding and collaborators
- To maximise the benefits of integration, RTU should develop a clear transition plan that protects the RTULA research identity while leveraging RTU's stronger research management, digital infrastructure, and international networks. Joint governance structures, shared research support services, and co-supervised projects would help align standards and reduce the administrative burden on academic staff. In parallel, RTU should invest in modernising creative labs and expanding interdisciplinary programmes, ensuring that RTULA becomes a regional hub for innovation rather than a peripheral unit within a larger institution. To achieve this, both institutions have to oversee academic policy, research strategy, quality assurance, HR, and infrastructure investments, ensuring that decisions are transparent and respected at both institutions. A phased integration would allow curricula, research priorities, and administrative processes to be aligned gradually, minimising disruption for students and staff
- As a matter of priority, RTULA should aim to diversify its international funding sources – especially EU Framework projects rather than just EU structural funding
- The unit would benefit from a more strategic plan for increasing the international visibility of its research. Such a strategy should include the explicit targeting of high-

quality journals, actively participating in international networks and conferences, gaining nominations to serve as members of the editorial boards of key journals, and national and international advisory boards

- The unit needs to increase its publication profile in highly rated outlets. While publishing in Latvian will remain an important part of the institution's output, academic staff need to be more ambitious in publishing in highly ranked international journals
- In support of this ambition, RTULA needs to strengthen strategies to increase the English language skills of its research staff
- With an overall academic staff of 12 (FTE) there must be considerable numbers who are not fully research active. This is reflected in the SWOT analysis, which, amongst other things, identifies 'low activity in attracting projects' as one of its weaknesses. The Expert Group therefore recommends that the unit review the effectiveness of its current incentive structure and support strategies to ensure that all academic staff reach their full potential as researchers
- In light of the reduced numbers of full-time equivalent academic staff, a key priority for the next evaluation period must be attracting, supporting and retaining international scientists and researchers.

S_17 ISMA Research Institute

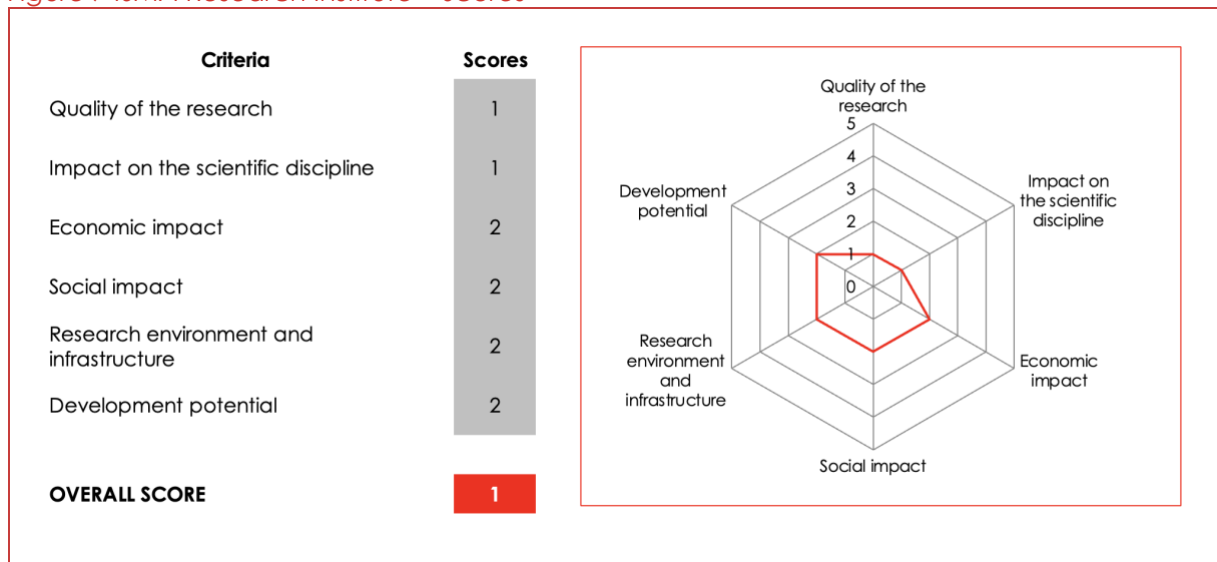
2.2.15 The unit

The ISMA Research Institute is part of the private ISMA University of Applied Sciences, focusing on advancing knowledge in business administration and information technology. Its mission is to foster a dynamic research environment that integrates academic inquiry with real-world applications, aiming to enhance scientific excellence and promote interdisciplinary collaboration. Research at the ISMA Research Institute is organised around key themes such as innovative business strategies, digital transformation in education, intellectual capital, and integrated information systems for sustainable development.

2.2.16 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 7 ISMA Research Institute – Scores



Overall score

Score 1: poor

The ISMA Research Institute's overall research performance is poor, with limited evidence of sustained or high-quality scholarly activity. While the unit seeks to address relevant topics at the intersection of business, technology, and sustainability, the research output is limited and lacks methodological rigour, theoretical coherence, and international visibility. The absence of an internal doctoral programme since 2020 and the reliance on affiliates and externally associated authors severely undermine the Institute's capacity to build a self-sustaining research culture. Many reported outputs are not at all or only weakly linked to ISMA's core staff, and the quality of much of the submitted work does not demonstrate adherence to recognised academic standards. In particular, many publications do not demonstrate clear research questions, appropriate use of established methods, robust data analysis, or engagement with relevant international literature, which are core elements of recognised academic standards. Economic and social impacts are modest and largely incidental rather than strategically developed. Despite some infrastructural improvements, the research environment remains fragmented, overstretched across too many thematic areas, and constrained by dependence on private funding. Overall, ISMA presents a weak and unsustainable research profile, with minimal disciplinary, national, or international impact.

Quality of the research performance

Score 1: poor

The research quality of the ISMA Research Institute is poor, and its research is predominantly national in scope and reach. The unit currently employs 11 senior researchers within an overall academic staff of 35 (FTE). ISMA has a broad research focus, situated at the intersection of business, technology, and sustainable development - particularly in the topical five areas of digital transformation, AI and big data in business, smart and sustainable city ecosystems, cybersecurity, and innovative education models.

ISMA has not operated its own doctoral study programmes since 2020. This poses a significant limitation to the development and sustainability of its own research. Instead, ISMA has established collaborations with primarily two institutions - Chernihiv National University of Technology in Ukraine and the Higher School of Security and Economics in Bulgaria. Through this consortium, ISMA provides co-supervisions, training and network access to the industry.

Institutional ownership of many presented outputs is not linked to the core research staff of ISMA (out of 87 papers submitted for bibliometric analysis, 51 had no links to ISMA). Several publications reported to the Expert Group did not have any author officially associated with the unit. This suggests a strong reliance on associated staff. Furthermore, full-text articles submitted for review (also with unclear links to the evaluated unit) are empirically flawed, for example, they do not describe the methods or do so vaguely, making them difficult to replicate and do not demonstrate methodological robustness.

Impact on the discipline

Score 1: poor

The impact on discipline is poor. Publications are often found in conference proceedings, and journal publications rarely appear in Q1 journals (12.1%). The outputs presented for evaluation have limited potential for impact on the discipline due to their being mostly descriptive, with no or very limited theoretical framing and a lack of methodological rigour.

There are some ongoing collaborations internationally with other faculties on individual studies. Faculty have journal board memberships, but they are primarily found in one publication (Economics and Education), which limits their scientific impact in this field and others. International conference attendance is limited to only a few conferences each year. Academic awards are limited to organisational service (e.g. honoured professor awards) rather than scientific contribution (e.g. best paper awards in journals or conferences). There is a structural problem of capability depth in individual academic fields, since the interdisciplinary areas and fields of research covered are broad, and the staff numbers are limited. This is caused by reliance on private funding for research, which tends to focus research on a relatively wide range of topics instead of specialising in a few areas, potentially leading to better quality. Overall, the unit has a weak research profile with limited national and international impact.

Economic impact

Score 2: adequate

A key research focus at ISMA is sustainable development, including regional development and the coastal economy. The economic impact is partly pursued through the research focus, which lies at the intersection of business, technology, and sustainable development. That the research funding is funded from private companies also steers the research to ensure relevance and applicability for the companies. There is a business incubator that supports new business initiatives and disseminates research to the industry. The unit is expanding its applied research through new laboratories, particularly in robotics and electronics. However, this is currently limited in scope and more of an exemplifying or testing than developing and implementing new technologies in practice. Several of the faculty are providing scientific advisory services to companies (e.g., in data analytics), covering a range of industry sectors and topics. Although beneficial to the companies themselves, this appears to be ad hoc, without a systematic and clear link to the institutional strategy. There is no systemic approach to organise these activities.

Social impact

Score 2: adequate

For social impact, ISMA faculty participate in research that has direct cultural and social implications, such as smart cities, sustainable tourism, and responsible consumption. The unit also aims to play an active role in promoting lifelong learning, digital inclusion, and educational accessibility, particularly through its work aligned with Strategic Development Goal 4 on Quality Education and Strategic Development Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth. Corporate social responsibility is a key research area that is expected to have a positive impact on society. However, the unit did not demonstrate actual examples of social impact.

The research environment and infrastructure

Score 2: adequate

Since 2019 ISMA has expanded its research capacity in three main ways: by modernizing laboratories and infrastructure, including in robotics, electronics, and data processing; developing new support systems for publishing, such as article editing, translation, and assistance with submitting to SCOPUS and Web of Science-indexed journals; expanding the business incubator and providing more resources to bridge academic research with entrepreneurial innovation and real-world applications. In addition, ISMA aims to foster a supportive environment for early-career researchers through various structures and practices that promote professional development and research activities. Support is offered for academic engagements, such as attendance at international conferences and journal publication fees. ISMA also encourages early-career researchers to participate in the Erasmus+ programme, providing them with opportunities for mobility, exchange programmes, and collaborations with other institutions across Europe. Open science policies are in place for the research conducted. Foreign lecturers are invited, which may enrich the research environment, but this depends on how much time is spent at ISMA beyond short visits for particular teaching or research engagements. The lab facilities have dual purposes of research and education, which enhances the latter but may limit more extensive research engagements.

However, the research strategy is unclear – the unit focuses on too many areas for its size and has no strategy or principles to narrow the scope down. The publication strategy is

international, but not consistently followed up, incentivised, or focused. Therefore, despite some improvements in infrastructure, the research environment still prevents the development of internationally relevant research.

Development potential

Score 2: *adequate*

ISMA seeks to strengthen its research development and publications while also supporting the development of technology applications. However, to date, its achievements have been relatively modest both in terms of high-quality publications and international collaborations. This is almost inevitable given its challenging funding model, relying on private funding, most of which is for specific and highly applied work and limited. The reliance on external researchers for publications also limits the staff development. These remain key factors preventing any significant developments in the research performance and potential. The research reliance on affiliates, at least in part, also impacts the units development potential, since notable research improvements require clear responsibilities and roles of the affiliates and their research.

There are plans to develop post-doctoral research at ISMA, contingent on securing external funding, such as through EU postdoctoral funding schemes. Should this succeed, it would help alleviate the current lack of in-house doctoral students. Attempts are also made to access doctoral students through shared supervisions and hosting partnerships. However, it is not apparent how viable this is to replace a doctoral programme where student can develop their research and participate in various unit activities over several years.

ISMA is well-positioned in terms of its research themes and dedication to the application of research. There are prioritised collaborations with industry and the public sector in the RiS3 fields. The new emphasis on technology and its applications is closely aligned with Latvian policy goals. Therefore, the unit is well placed to make further contributions to the achievement of these objectives. However, that potential will be difficult to realise within its current funding model and limited active inhouse researchers.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

Until 2020, ISMA had a doctoral programme with 48 students, but this has been closed. The underlying reason for this is not apparent from the documentation, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the future potential of offering doctoral studies again. However, in recent years, ISMA has entered into collaborative arrangements with two international universities, providing co-supervisions and research student exchanges. This indicates there is an interest in doctoral studies by both the faculty and the administration.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

The unit shows a strong alignment with the Latvian Smart Specialisation Strategy (RiS3) in its research focus, with its emphasis on digital transformation, AI and big data in business, smart and sustainable city ecosystems, and cybersecurity. The strategic pursuit of technology application that ISMA has set in its strategy plan is closely aligned with the set RiS3 goals.

Recommendations

ISMA has a clear focus on the intersection of business, technology, and sustainable development. This is aligned with the policy goals of Latvia and the development of its economy. However, steps taken are still relatively modest and will require both staffing and financial resources. The Expert Group recommends the following:

- Strengthen methodological and theoretical rigour across all research outputs. To improve research quality, ISMA should implement a structured internal system for developing, reviewing, and monitoring research. For collaborative research activities, emphasis should be placed on leveraging these to developing the staff further in conducting and publishing high-quality research rather than relying on external associations. ISMA should provide targeted training in research methods, study design, and academic writing, data handling, and replicability.
- Develop a focused research strategy with clear thematic priorities. ISMA should narrow its research scope to a small number of well-defined thematic areas where it has genuine expertise and the potential to achieve international recognition. Concentrating resources will deepen capability within specific fields, increase research quality, and reduce fragmentation.
- The research staff is evenly spread in terms of seniority, so there should not be a problem of succession in the next few years. It also seeks to provide early career and postdoctoral support and opportunities, which may help ensure access to suitable and skilled junior staff for the future. Note that the expansion into technology will require a significant expansion of staff expertise in those areas, and that growth may not be sufficiently met through temporary visitors or incoming researchers on exchanges. Such staff growth will require careful funding considerations. Aligning and managing research collaborations between the staff and external affiliates (e.g., use formal agreements) will be critical as the research develops.
- Similarly, the research infrastructure in terms of physical and support services may be adequate for more social science types of research, but it will require significant development for the more technical research fields that are planned for. The existing well-established collaborations with companies may provide relevant and suitable support and research access for such technical research. Similarly, there are existing relations with academic institutions (both Latvian and others) on specific research projects. These collaborations may be broadened to support research beyond the co-supervision of doctoral students and include collaboration with senior staff.
- ISMA no longer has its own doctoral programme. Instead, the unit has adopted a collaborative model, partnering with two foreign institutions and offering co-supervision and exchanges. Whether it is possible to reintroduce a doctoral program is contingent on resolving the underlying reasons it was closed in the first place. The support and research experience offered to doctoral students from the partnership institutions suggest there is an interest in eventually restarting the doctoral program. However, this should only be pursued if the funding implications are carefully considered and favourable, and students admitted fit in the areas where ISMA has considerable expertise.

S_19 Transport and Telecommunication Institute

2.2.17 The unit

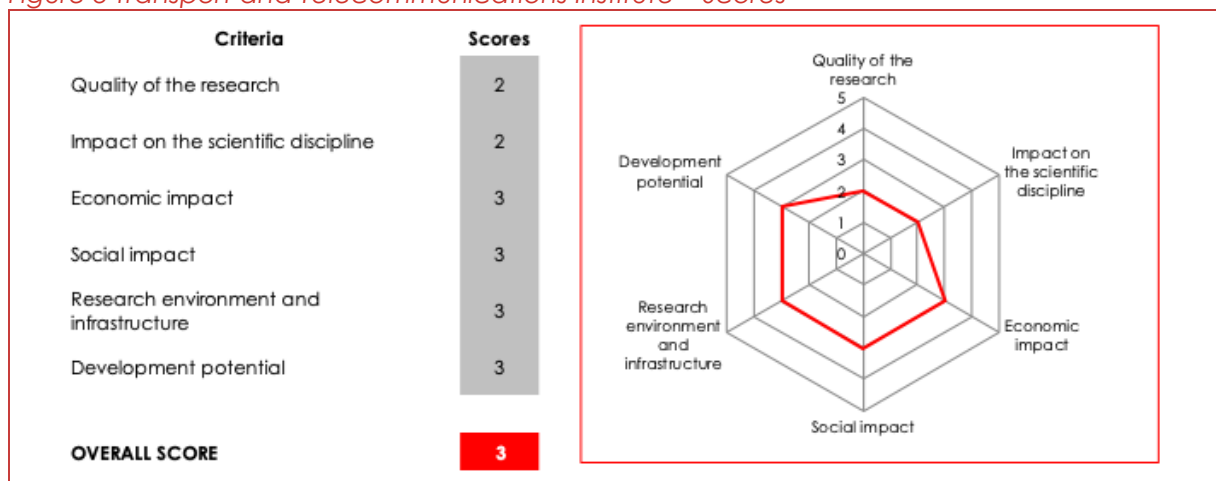
The Transport and Telecommunication Institute (TSI) is a university of applied science established in 1999, focusing on social sciences, engineering, and technology. TSI aims to be a leading private technical university in the Baltic Sea region, with a mission to create and disseminate knowledge that positively impacts the community and the wider region. TSI's research directions include ICT, smart solutions in transport and logistics, and digital society and economy.

The institute has established Research Clusters to support interdisciplinary research, integrate students, and strengthen industry collaboration. These clusters include Modelling-Based Systems Analysis and Design, Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence, and Robotics and Additive Technologies Innovation. TSI emphasises integration of social science perspectives with technological innovation, addressing societal challenges through data analytics, intelligent transport systems, and AI.

2.2.18 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 8 Transport and Telecommunications Institute – Scores



Overall score

Score 3: good

The institute is part of a specialised Transport University, so the focus is technological rather than social sciences more broadly. Nevertheless, the Social Sciences at TSI have been successful in attracting grants and producing publications, despite having a small number of staff and an uncertain funding climate, relying mostly on competitive funding. Its niche role has been in the field of social science, particularly in areas such as digital business environments, smart cities, and transportation issues, linked to engineering. The Institute demonstrates an adequate level of research quality and disciplinary impact, with a clear strategic focus on applied research in transportation, logistics, digitalisation, and smart solutions. Although the publication impact and the share of high-ranked journal outputs remain limited, recent initiatives - including performance incentives, systematic monitoring of research outputs, participation in international networks, and the establishment of a doctoral school—indicate a positive momentum. The economic and social relevance of the Institute's research is a notable strength, supported by strong industry partnerships, contributions to regional development, and knowledge-transfer activities. The research environment is supportive and well embedded in national and international networks, despite the constraints posed by a small research staff.

Importantly, the Institute has a promising development trajectory, with strategic plans, international project participation, and a growing interdisciplinary agenda that aligns well with European research priorities. Sustained focus on high-quality publications, strengthening evidence of societal impact, and expanding research capacity will be critical to realising this potential and securing a stronger research profile in the coming years.

It has strong links with industry and partners with local industries, such as the airport, to develop projects and fund research. A particularly successful aspect of this strategy was the creation of the iDEAHUB, which facilitated knowledge transfer among industry partners and encouraged innovation from students. Interdisciplinarity is a strong feature of the approach to the research areas, as evident in both the projects and the staff's interests, so that social sciences and technology are fully interlocked. This is an unusual and special asset for the institution. The Institute's orientation as a science research centre is relatively recent, so many aspirations have not yet been realised, but there is a strong research strategy in place to grow resources.

Quality of Research

Score 2: adequate

The quality of research is adequate. Publications are improving in quality and quantity, but the overall share of publications in Q1 and Q2-ranked journals remains low, e.g. Q1 are only 14.4%. Nevertheless, plans are in place to improve this aspect of the research strategy by offering incentives to staff and systematically tracking and analysing publications (e.g., through SciVal). Both faculty and administration seem aware of this need and seek measures to ensure the improvement strategy is implemented and followed. The doctoral programmes play a key role in supporting the unit's research activities, although the doctoral school was only started in 2024. There is a biannual conference to provide dissemination and networking opportunities for training early-career researchers and doctoral students.

Given the Institute's focus, the originality and significance of the work need to be seen in an applied perspective (informing practice). In this respect, the Institute is strong, even if generally its research performance is weak in terms of refining social science theories or conceptual frameworks. Although narrowly focused on its research, the TSI demonstrates interdisciplinarity with technology and transport fields and exhibits an improving research performance. There is an explicit and dedicated effort to establish international links and thereby enhance the unit's research visibility internationally through participation in initiatives such as COST networks, ERASMUS+ programmes, and EU Horizon projects. Although the doctoral programme is at an early stage, there is a strategy to grow this area of work and provide a supportive career structure to nurture doctoral students and early career researchers in order to support long-term succession planning.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 2: adequate

The impact on the discipline is adequate. The TSI has been involved in various EU and other projects and partnerships. This is a good performance, but being very recent, the outcomes of these projects are yet to emerge. The academic conference organised by the institute attracts mostly local or Baltic interest.

The number of its publications shows a slow and uneven upward trajectory. Publications are improving in quality and quantity, but the overall share of publications in Q1 and Q2 journals remains low and can improve further. FWCI is well below (0.75) the world average, showing limited impact on the discipline. There are several journal articles related to digital banking and smart specialisation, although they are published in lower-ranking journals. Several publications

in the list of most significant publications are in MDPI journals, which are known to have a mixed reputation.

Access to international research networks on transportation gives TSI staff direct research input into the science field. The impact of TSI is notably stronger in its core research fields (e.g. transportation infrastructure) than overall. This is evident from the scope of successful international and national research grants, research collaborations, and staff memberships in committees and in scientific advisory boards.

Economic impact

Score 3: good

The economic impact of TSI research is good. TSI prioritises applied research in transportation, logistics, smart solutions, and digitalisation, all of which have an impact on the regional and national economy. There are numerous contributions to practical innovations and industrial developments, as well as policy planning, in Latvia and internationally. The role of the IDEAHUB in creating knowledge transfer and innovation is a significant factor enabling the economic impact of research. Economic impact is pursued through shared projects with local private and public entities, offering them access to research results. The focus of much of the research is directly applicable to economic growth in the region, for instance, in the area of urban mobility. Although research is relevant, and this is also testified by the industry partners, specific examples of actual applications are limited.

Social impact

Score 3: good

The social impact of research is good, although concrete examples are limited. Social impact is primarily achieved through research on issues around mobility, digitalisation, and transportation. Several projects have a direct impact on public well-being and community conditions, for example, research on transport systems management. TSI also promotes public understanding of its research through events such as the European Researchers' Night, Smart Move Hackathon, and science-themed activities (the latter in secondary schools).

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 3: good

The research environment at TSI is good despite the small number of staff and limited research time. There is active involvement in FAIR management, and a research support administration has been set up to facilitate the work of researchers in applying for and administering projects. There are good digital bibliographic resources and software available. The TSI is well-embedded in national research networks and policy relations at both national and local levels. One notable example is the output of the HORIZON project – a recommendation to the European Commission about the policy and framework for preparing employees for global transformation in the era of automation.

Efforts are made to participate in international funding opportunities, with TSI staff participating, for instance, in EU Horizon calls (seven in total, with two successful outcomes) and Erasmus+ initiatives. There is also participation in international associations and public bodies such as ECTRI and EIT Urban Mobility. Existing labs and physical infrastructure are primarily focused on ITC, but collaborations around infrastructure research provide access to an international network within the transportation field.

The FTE-to-faculty ratio is quite low (maximum 8 FTE research personnel in the evaluation period), indicating a reliance on part-time and visiting staff. This may be appropriate in

providing faculty with relevant experience for teaching, but for research, it reduces the number of staff who are more dedicated to developing and conducting research specifically at TSI.

Development potential

Score 3: good

The development potential is good. Several measures have been implemented or are planned to be implemented, including interdisciplinary research clusters to promote collaborative research, a career structure for doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, and early-career researchers to enable them to benefit from their work and networking opportunities, and an incentive plan for high-impact publications. The main research strategy is only just beginning in 2026, and many of the developments at TSI are relatively recent (for example, the establishment of a doctoral school in 2024). However, the strategic direction and recent progress in securing funding are promising and indicate good development potential if the strategic directions are followed through.

The institution has begun to expand its scope from ICT and transportation into digital business and societal domains for which there is increasing demand. This should enhance the societal impact of the research, although it may reduce the availability of research resources. External funding is being actively sought, and several successful bids are expected to lead to further successes if knowledge about grant applications is shared among the faculty. Importantly, there are performance indicators and support in place to help improve the research outputs, grant applications, and research collaborations.

Staff development is taking place through new research clusters, incentive and reward schemes, and extended professional collaborations. This should further strengthen faculty expertise. Developments in fostering early-career researchers should help ensure staff continuity.

TSI views itself as an active research institution, despite its small size and limited staff, and has a strong plan for future growth in the social sciences field.

There is a deliberate effort to align research priorities with EU research priorities such as smart mobility, AI logistics and green logistics programmes, which should enable successful project applications in the future.

Potential to offer doctoral studies

The number of doctoral students increased from 0 in 2019 to 11 (with 15 in 2023) over the reporting period. The Doctoral School was established only in 2024, so this is a recent development. This is a significant achievement, and the addition of external co-supervisors has supplemented the limited research resources. TSI offers two PhD programmes in Telematics and Logistics, as well as in Digital Economy and Business. It provides pathways for graduates and early-career researchers through structured mentorship, international supervision, and participation in research projects and consortia. There is significant demand for the Digital Economy and Business Master's field, which should lead to further PhDs in this field in the future.

Alignment with the Smart Specialisation Strategy

The Smart Specialisation Strategy is fully embedded in the activities of the TSI in the fields of transport and communications, as well as in new developments in digital business. Given the focus on applied technology, the TSI is well-positioned to respond to the Smart Specialisation

Strategy, which is integrated into its research activities and plans. In the field of transport and urban mobility, it is a key player in the Latvian research landscape.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

In alignment with state policies, there is strong collaboration with industry in the form of a range of applied research projects, which are also reflected in the publication profile of the unit. The TSI is well placed to feed into the various technology and digital initiatives (e.g. with its work on digital logistics systems) being developed in Latvia and around the city of Riga. It can facilitate knowledge transfer and lend expertise in its core areas of the digital economy, mobility, and cities.

Recommendations

- The Institute has developed a clear and coherent research vision that is strongly oriented toward technological development and applied research projects. This direction is appropriate for an institution with a specialised profile in ICT, transportation, and smart solutions. To maximise the benefits of this strategic positioning, the Institute should further strengthen and incentivise embedded interdisciplinary research across technology, business, and social science domains. Reinforcing mechanisms such as cross-departmental research clusters, interdisciplinary doctoral supervision, and targeted funding calls would help consolidate this strength. Reward structures and recognition schemes for impactful interdisciplinary outputs - particularly those aligned with industry needs and international research priorities - would also enhance research quality, visibility, and external engagement.
- The Institute is particularly strong in fostering research collaborations with industry partners and promoting student initiatives. This means that patents are included in its research outputs. The Expert Group were of the opinion that this is one of the particular strengths of the institution, and should be continued, but care should be taken to consider contributions in the form of publications to social science more generally in dedicated social science journals in addition to more specialised journals in order to improve the scholarly international visibility of the TSI
- TSI publishes its own journal, which facilitates research dissemination; however, care must be taken not to rely solely on in-house publications. Furthermore, the pressure to publish can lead to prioritising low-ranking journals where publication turnaround is faster. The Expert Group were of the opinion that there should be a greater focus on targeting high-quality journals to make a more international impact. While publication output is improving, the proportion of articles in Q1–Q2 journals and the overall FWCI remain low. To strengthen scientific visibility and impact, the Institute should intensify efforts to support high-quality research outputs. This could be achieved through targeted mentoring for early-career researchers, internal peer-review processes prior to journal submission, and incentive schemes tied specifically to publications in higher-ranked journals
- Research activities clearly address national economic and societal priorities, but documented examples of real-world applications remain limited. To better demonstrate value and enhance future funding prospects, the Institute should systematically capture and publicise measurable outcomes of its research - such as implemented solutions, piloted technologies, policy changes, or industrial uptake of innovations. Developing a structured impact-tracking mechanism and strengthening outreach to local and regional stakeholders would further support this ambition, highlighting the Institute's growing contribution to the economy and society

- The Expert Group was of the opinion that there should be a strategic focus on both international and regional leadership in research. The networks of the institute would suggest that there is more potential for this. The increase in EU funding suggests that there is already movement in this direction, and this should be continued and strengthened. Participation in international networks and projects should be encouraged and rewarded
- The doctoral training school is off to a good start with increasing (but small) numbers of students. It would be beneficial to see this work increase with the new doctoral funding provisions introduced in Latvia.

S_20 Riga Graduate School of Law

2.2.19 The unit

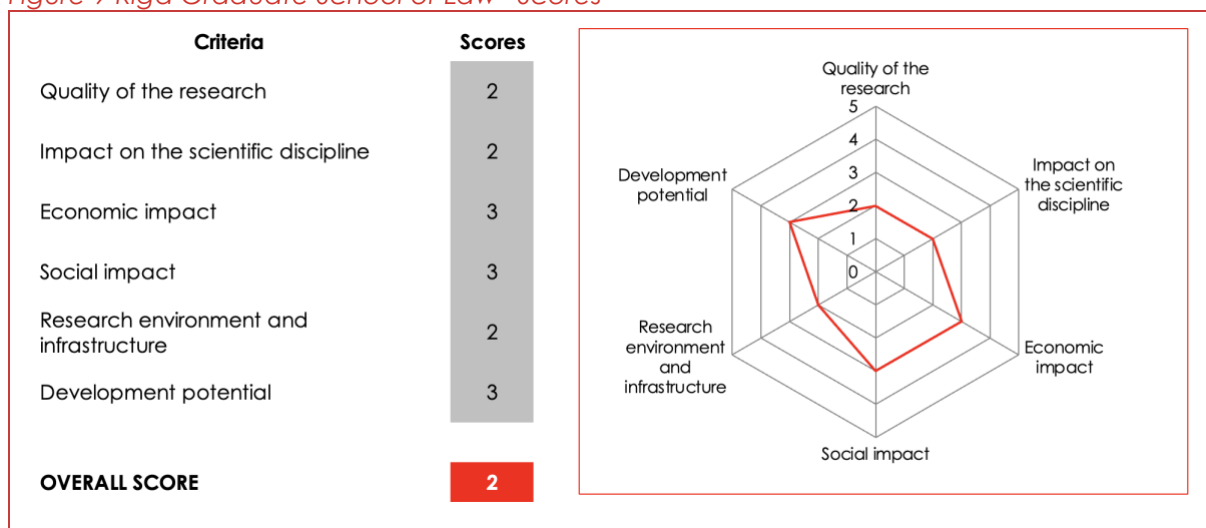
The Riga Graduate School of Law (RGSL) is a private higher education institution in Latvia, focusing on social sciences, particularly law. Established in 1998, RGSL aims to become a leading research-intensive centre for legal studies in the Baltic region. Its mission is to provide high-quality, internationally oriented legal education, preparing students for a dynamic global environment. RGSL's research areas include International and European Law, Human Rights, Law and Business, Financial Law, and Diplomacy. RGSL operates without public funding, relying on private, project-based, and other revenue streams. It is located in Riga, Latvia, and offers accredited Master's and Bachelor's programmes in English, with a focus on international law and interdisciplinary studies.

RGSL organises its research around key areas such as Public International Law, Private International Law, International Human Rights Law, Contract Law, and Property Law. The institution emphasises interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating fields like business, international relations, and technology with law.

2.2.20 Expert Group evaluation

The figure below presents the scores assigned by the Expert Group to the unit.

Figure 9 Riga Graduate School of Law– Scores



Overall score

Score 2: adequate

The Riga Graduate School of Law (RGSL) is a small, specialised higher education institution that combines high-quality teaching with developing research activities in international, European, and technology law. The institution's mission is primarily educational, serving as a bridge between academia, policy, and professional practice. Its international orientation and English-language environment are distinctive features in the Latvian context. Research activity, while thematically coherent and socially relevant, remains modest in scope, output, and international reach. The Expert Group recognises evidence of progress through participation in European projects and contributions to legal scholarship, yet the level of research intensity and international visibility remains below that of established research universities. The overall score of 2 reflects a competent institution that is a developing national player with some international engagement, whose research performance is consistent with a primarily teaching-oriented profile.

Quality of Research

Score 2: adequate

RGSL's research is focused on public international law, European Union law, human rights, and technology law. These areas are closely linked to the institution's teaching programmes, including the Bachelor's in Law and Diplomacy and the Master's programmes in International and European Law and in Law and Technology. The research portfolio comprises publications in peer-reviewed journals, contributions to edited volumes, and policy reports generated within international projects. Notable outputs include contributions to the "Baltic Yearbook" of International Law" and to the "European Journal of Law Reform". Academic staff have also authored chapters in collective volumes published by international publishers (e.g. Brill), often reflecting applied research perspectives on legal reform (from Baltic perspective) and digital governance.

RGSL participates in externally funded research projects such as "Central Asian Law" (Horizon 2020), "ENDE – Europe, Narrative, Democracy", and the "3IPEP – Interdisciplinary Partnership for Policy and Education" project, all of which involve European academic partnerships. These initiatives demonstrate a small institution's ability to engage in collaborative research.

However, the number of peer-reviewed articles is low (only 31 over the evaluation period), and shares in high-impact (Q1 and Q2) journals remain very small, and most research output is oriented toward applied legal questions or regional issues. The Expert Group finds that the quality of individual outputs is adequate and that several staff members demonstrate clear potential, but heavy teaching obligations constrain overall research productivity and quality. Teaching obligations require a substantial share of staff working time. Heavy teaching loads constrain research quality primarily by reducing the time continuity, depth, and strategic coherence required for high-quality scholarly work. Efforts to introduce internal incentives for research and to support project writing are positive steps that should be further developed.

Impact on scientific discipline

Score 2: adequate

The Expert Group recognises RGSL's research contributes to the development of legal thought in Latvia and the Baltic region, particularly in public international law, European integration, and governance. Faculty members are active in editorial work for the "Baltic Yearbook of International Law", in peer-reviewing for international journals, and in academic networks such as the Association of Human Rights Institutes (AHRI) and COST Actions. The annual Human Rights and Good Governance Conference, organised since 2006, has become a recognised forum for dialogue among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers, contributing to the visibility of Latvian legal research.

Nevertheless, RGSL's impact on international disciplinary debates remains very modest. The institution's outputs are rarely cited in global academic databases (WoS, Scopus), and its researchers have limited participation in leading editorial boards or international research networks. The Expert Group finds that RGSL plays a meaningful but secondary role in advancing legal scholarship, contributing more significantly to professional and policy discourse than to fundamental theoretical development. The unit's published outputs primarily focus on Latvia. The publication strategy should be internationalised, including support for conceptual submissions, submissions to indexed journals and collaboration with partner institutions on comparative research to enhance disciplinary impact.

Social impact

Score 3: good

RGSL's contribution to Latvian society is particularly evident through its public engagement, ongoing education, and participation in national and international policymaking. Researchers at RGSL are members of various committees, for example, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, which contributes to shaping constitutional and legal reforms in Europe, the Advisory Council for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and many others. Faculty members are frequently invited to comment on legal and governance matters in the media and to advise governmental bodies. The institution's annual Human Rights Conference, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is a flagship event that brings together academics, practitioners, and representatives from civil society to discuss issues such as equality, the rule of law, and democratic resilience. These activities reinforce RGSL's role as a forum for public dialogue and civic education.

RGSL also contributes to the dissemination of European values and the strengthening of the rule of law through its Jean Monnet teaching activities and projects like "ENDE", which promote democratic narratives and human rights. Through public lectures and engagement with NGOs, the institution addresses contemporary challenges, including misinformation and digital ethics. The Expert Group finds that RGSL's societal engagement is strong and appropriate to its mission. The impact arises more from education and outreach than from high-volume academic research, yet it is an important contribution to the social development of Latvia and the wider region.

Economic impact

Score 3: good

The Expert Group finds that RGSL's research and teaching contribute indirectly but substantially to Latvia's economy through capacity-building, professional training, and regulatory development. By producing highly qualified legal experts fluent in English and trained in European and international law, RGSL supports both the public administration and the private sector. Its alumni hold positions in ministries, courts, law firms, and international organisations, strengthening Latvia's competitiveness and governance.

Applied research in technology law, data protection, and digital transformation contributes to the development of the digital economy and supports national strategies for innovation and cyber-governance - the Master's programme in Law and Technology and related research activities foster expertise in a fast-growing sector. However, the economic impact remains largely demonstrated through advisory, educational, and regulatory channels, rather than through research-driven activity. Collaboration with the private sector is visible through guest lectures, joint seminars, and consultancy projects. While RGSL's direct contribution to market innovation or commercialisation is limited, its role in shaping a legally informed, ethically grounded, and digitally competent workforce is economically significant and consistent with the expectations for an academic institution of its size. A higher score would require more systematic engagement in applied, externally funded research with clear economic objectives, measurable influence on sector-specific regulatory reforms, or sustained collaboration with industry and public authorities that demonstrably shapes market practices.

Research environment and infrastructure

Score 2: adequate

The research environment at RGSL benefits from clear governance, stable leadership, and modern facilities. The institution operates under an independent foundation structure that ensures autonomy and financial sustainability. The law library is a notable asset, widely

regarded as one of the best in the Baltic region, and provides access to a comprehensive range of databases, including HeinOnline, Westlaw, and LexisNexis. Academic staff have access to project support and limited internal funding for conference participation and publishing fees. The appointment of a research coordinator and the inclusion of research performance indicators in staff evaluation represent positive developments.

However, the Expert Group observes several structural limitations. The number of research-active staff remains small (around ten), and the absence of doctoral studies restricts the development of a vertically integrated research culture. High teaching loads for the academic staff, particularly in English-language programmes, reduce available research time. While the infrastructure is functional and efficient, additional human resources, research leave schemes, and long-term funding mechanisms would be required to achieve sustained research output. The environment supports teaching excellence and applied projects, but only partially supports systematic academic research and is only evolving in that direction; therefore, the Expert Group scores it '2'.

Development potential

Score 3: good

Although the institution continues to face structural constraints related to its small size, teaching-intensive profile, and limited eligibility for national research funding, the evidence indicates a clear awareness of these challenges and a coherent strategy to address them. The unit has articulated focused and realistic development priorities, particularly in the areas of digitalisation, governance, and human rights, and has demonstrated capacity to mobilise international cooperation through European projects and Jean Monnet actions. Importantly, several measures to strengthen research capacity - such as internal incentives, support for project acquisition, targeted recruitment, and enhanced use of existing research infrastructure - are already being implemented. While the current research base remains limited, the proposed partnership-based model for further development, including structured cooperation with European universities, constitutes a feasible pathway for incremental strengthening of research activity. Taken together, these elements support the assessment that RGSL shows a credible and proportionate development trajectory consistent with the criteria for a score of 3 in Development Potential.

The Expert Group considers that a strategic partnership model, including joint research with the University of Latvia and European partner institutions, would be the most effective way to consolidate and expand RGSL's research activities. With sustained institutional support and targeted recruitment, RGSL could progressively evolve from a developing national player into a recognised regional actor.

Potential to Offer Doctoral Studies

The Expert Group finds that RGSL does not currently have the critical mass or research intensity required to support doctoral studies. The institution's academic staff are competent and active in supervision at the master's level, but the absence of a strong research culture and environment, consistent publication output, and stable funding precludes the establishment of a doctoral programme. Collaboration with partner universities - for example, through joint supervision or visiting scholar exchanges - could offer alternative ways to develop doctoral capacity in the longer term.

Alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3)

RGSL's research and teaching activities align well with Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy, particularly with Priority 4 (Information and Communication Technologies) and Priority 5 (Education, Skills, and Human Capital). Through its Law and Technology programme and research on data governance, artificial intelligence, and digital ethics, the institution contributes to the legal infrastructure supporting digital transformation. By educating professionals in European and international law, RGSL enhances governance quality and supports Latvia's strategic objective of building a knowledge-based economy. Its interdisciplinary approach—integrating law, diplomacy, and governance—provides a valuable human capital contribution to national and regional development.

Conformity with state scientific and technology development

In many ways, this unit is well-positioned to contribute to Latvia's scientific and technical development. It does so primarily through its teaching, including a specialist master's track in Law and Technology. The unit also appears to be well-networked with the legal profession, making an important contribution to the development of law practices across Latvia. However, at present, the current contribution to research is not well developed.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen the research culture** by introducing structured research time, internal peer-review processes, and performance-based incentives for publication in international journals. To improve research output and quality, RGSL should establish clearer structures for research time and internal support. Scheduled research periods and reduced teaching loads for active researchers would enhance the rigour of submissions and increase the proportion of publications reaching indexed journals. Introducing performance-based incentives linked to high-quality outputs - including international journal articles, external grant applications, and successful project coordination - would further encourage staff engagement in research activities
- **Enhance international visibility** through joint research projects, comparative studies, and participation in global legal networks and editorial boards. Although RGSL engages in some European collaborative projects, the institution's presence in global legal scholarship remains very limited. Greater participation in international research networks, COST Actions, Jean Monnet initiatives, and editorial boards would help raise its profile. Joint publications with international partners and comparative research projects would enhance citation impact and position RGSL more firmly within international debates. Hosting visiting researchers and organising targeted thematic workshops could further expand international collaboration.
- Strengthen research capacity through structured collaboration with the University of Latvia and other European universities at both master's and doctoral levels. Strategic collaboration with the University of Latvia and European partner institutions would help overcome structural limitations caused by RGSL's small research staff and the absence of doctoral studies. Joint research groups, co-supervised doctoral projects, and shared research seminars would build a vertically integrated research environment. Such cooperation would also support sustained involvement in Horizon Europe projects and increase access to the national funding stream. The Expert Group considers that a strategic partnership model, including joint research (e.g., co-authored comparative

studies in EU and international law, collaborative grant applications) with the University of Latvia and European partner institutions, would be the most effective way to consolidate and expand RGSL's research activities. With sustained institutional support and targeted recruitment, RGSL could progressively evolve from a developing national player into a recognised regional actor.

- **Invest in early-career development**, including mentoring, research methodology workshops, and participation in international summer schools or exchanges.

3 Summary of findings across the set of unit evaluations

Key strengths

Most units have made notable progress in aligning their activities with national and EU research priorities, including the Smart Specialisation Strategy and Horizon Europe objectives. This has led to increasing success in attracting international funding. For example, the University of Latvia's FESS is involved in several international research surveys, including the European Social Survey, European Values Survey, and SHARE surveys. Daugavpils University has been awarded a UNESCO Chair in Sustainable Education.

One of the major strengths of the reviewed units is their commitment to applied research. In line with Latvian Government policy, the Expert Group noted strong links with regional and national industry partners. This commitment to applied research has led to a significant amount of interdisciplinary research across the sector as a whole. In some cases, as for example in the Transport and Telecommunications Institute, those collaborations involve researchers from social science and technology working jointly. Interdisciplinary work was also strongly in evidence, for example, in Riga Stradiņš University, where the Expert Group noted evidence of interdisciplinary work within political science, law, anthropology, and media studies.

Scholars of reviewed units produce a significant amount of policy-relevant information for both decision-makers and the broader public. Regular stakeholders include various ministries. A particularly important example is the research by University of Latvia FESS scholars on Russian disinformation, diaspora, and regional security. Another example is the University of Latvia Faculty of Law. The quality of its work is evidenced by influential monographs and peer-reviewed publications that are widely cited in judicial decisions — for instance, the commentary on Criminal Law, cited over 1,000 times, and the monograph on the Law of Obligations, cited over 600 times.

The economic and social impact is strong in most institutions. For example, the University of Latvia's Faculty of Law contributes economically indirectly through its contribution to the functioning, stability, and modernisation of Latvia's legal system - the backbone of a predictable business environment and economic development. Other institutions have a more direct economic impact. For example, the Transport and Telecommunication Institute has strong links with industry and partners with local industries, such as the airport, to develop projects and fund research. A particularly successful aspect of this strategy is the creation of the iDEAHUB, which facilitates knowledge transfer among industry partners and encourages innovation from students.

Social impact is well illustrated by research at RTULA. During the review period, RTULA has helped to foster national identity and community engagement through projects on the Latvian language, literature, and cultural heritage, integrating technologies and new media art. In addition, research on digital preservation and cultural analytics has enriched public understanding of Latvia's history, cultural heritage and identity.

Doctoral studies are already well established in most of the units reviewed. Overall, completion rates are sound, and there was strong evidence of good relationships between students and their supervisors, including co-authoring publications with supervisors. The Expert Group observed a discrepancy in the publication requirements imposed on PhD students. Some are expected to produce an excessively high number of publications, which can negatively affect the quality of their doctoral research, while others face more reasonable expectations. A harmonised policy in this respect would be welcome.

Main weaknesses

The expert group noted a number of weaknesses:

1. **Applied research:** As already noted, there is a strong commitment to applied research overall. While such a policy has evident strengths, if carried too far, it narrows the scope of research that can be conducted. This, in turn, may have consequences for the international impact of the research undertaken. In the next phase of development, it would be appropriate for the government to encourage a more balanced approach, valuing both applied and fundamental research.
2. **Internationalisation:** Since the last evaluation, it is evident that most units have made efforts to increase the international visibility of their research. There are, of course, serious challenges here. Latvian researchers clearly do need to maintain a strong commitment to researching Latvian issues and publishing in the Latvian language. At the same time, however, strong international recognition is crucial for the overall development of the sector. In recent years, the units have made some progress in this regard, but there is still a long way to go. Currently, there is an excessive focus on 'international work' in the Baltic region. In the next stage of development, all institutions need to develop policies to support researchers in reaching a much broader audience for their work.
3. **Publication incentives:** In all units reviewed, the Expert Group noted that there was strong pressure on both staff and doctoral students to publish. For doctoral students, achieving a significant number of publications was part of the formal requirement for their degree; for research staff, pressure involved financial and other kinds of incentives. Overall, publication levels have increased since the last evaluation; that is positive. Nevertheless, in too many instances, it was evident that the pressure to publish was encouraging staff and doctoral students to turn to low-quality, rapid-turnaround outlets rather than higher-quality ones. Developing better quality, higher-impact publications involves more than giving incentives. It involves careful planning, for example, targeting the appropriate conferences attended by editors, selecting data based on journals' preferences, etc. At present, there seems to be little planning at an institutional level as to how to increase the quality and impact of staff and student publications.
4. **Funding:** Funding was a major challenge in most of the units the Expert Group reviewed. Even those universities that were able to receive state funding found it challenging to offer sufficient time, space and incentives for certain types of research, particularly fundamental research.

Conclusions

The evidence from the 10 institutions reviewed demonstrates clearly that the units have made considerable progress since the last review. The units are better managed and are more visible internationally, particularly in the Baltic region. However, the next stage of development would be strengthening their international profile beyond the Baltic. In the first instance, this needs to be led at an institutional level with a greater understanding of what is required to achieve genuine international recognition.

Recommendations

1. **Internationalisation:** institutional leaders should develop clear and explicit policies on how to encourage and facilitate the international visibility of their research beyond the Baltic region.
2. **Publication incentives:** institutions should review the effectiveness of their current requirements and incentives for supporting publication with the aim of encouraging both staff and doctoral students to produce better quality, higher impact publications.

Appendix A Feedback on Expert Group assessment

Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management, Riga Technical University feedback to Expert Group evaluation

III Factual Clarifications and Corrections for the Engineering Economics and Management (FEEM)

The FEEM confirms that the Expert Panel conducted its assessment visit on 1 October 2025. We would, however, like to note that the visit did not extend for the full three hours originally scheduled (15:30–18:30). At approximately 18:10, the experts indicated that they would like to conclude the tour, which meant that the faculty could not present the full range of research infrastructure and facilities planned in the previously submitted agenda. As a result, only the RTU Design Factory and selected innovation projects involving FEEM researchers and students were demonstrated, while planned visits to the Sustainable Materials Lab and the Real Estate and Urban Planning Lab - where researchers and PhD students were prepared to present outcomes of international research projects (e.g., Horizon Europe, Interreg, Digital Europe) and related infrastructure - could not take place within the shortened timeframe. It is possible that this limitation may have influenced the assessment of the “Research Environment and Infrastructure” criterion, which received a score of “3”.

In addition, RTU FEEM respectfully notes that it does not fully concur with several observations made by the experts and therefore requests a reconsideration of the scores awarded in the criteria “Quality of Research”, “Social Impact”, “Development Potential”, and “Research Environment and Infrastructure”.

Quality of Research

Experts’ statement (p.2, the 3rd paragraph):

“Research grants have been won annually, but with notable fluctuation in annual levels. This indicates the strength and competitiveness of the scientific expertise available among the staff but also suggests an overly narrow research scope (and hence a reliance on available research calls) or a reliance on a few active applicants.”

Clarification:

² Horizon 2020

In Section 3.3, the most significant research projects are presented (33 projects in total, including four Horizon Europe initiatives), while Section 7.1 outlines key international cooperation projects with a cumulative budget exceeding 6.4 million EUR. These results demonstrate substantial progress when compared to the previous evaluation period, during which the faculty was primarily engaged in national-level research activities. We therefore believe that the unit has achieved notable advancement in terms of scale, scope, and international competitiveness. Although highly established professors lead these projects to ensure scientific quality and strategic alignment, early-career researchers also participate actively, contributing to capacity building and knowledge transfer.

Furthermore, Table 7.1 shows a consistent upward trajectory in competitive research funding, rising from 420 KEUR in 2019 to 828 KEUR in 2024; hence, we do not agree that there are significant annual fluctuations. The project portfolio covers a broad range of thematic domains while remaining aligned with FEEM's strategic research priorities - business dynamics and integrative security - thereby strengthening the faculty's trajectory toward international-level research excellence. It is also important to note that, following the recommendations provided in the previous evaluation, the faculty successfully consolidated its activities around clearly defined excellence areas, as reflected in Section 1.17.

Impact on the scientific discipline

Experts' statement (p.2, the last paragraph):

"There are also substantial levels of staff academic stewardship, e.g. journal editorial board roles, although this has more of a national scope than an international one."

Clarification:

We would like to note that Section 6.2 indicates that FEEM academic staff serve as editors in 12 Scopus Q1/Q2 journals, none of which are based in Latvia. This suggests that the unit's scholarly engagement and influence extend beyond the national context.

Social Impact

Experts' statement (p. 3; the 5th paragraph):

"The unit implements various dissemination activities by informing about its research, but there is no systematic monitoring or evaluation of how research-based interventions influence policy, behaviour change, or long-term societal outcomes, which makes it difficult to demonstrate broader impact. Systematic follow-up on these activities would provide useful insights on what audiences to target."

Clarification:

We would like to clarify that, at RTU in general and at RTU FEEM in particular, communication and dissemination activities are systematically monitored (see Section 1.16, which provides quantitative indicators of outreach from several communication campaigns). Academic staff also contribute to policy development through participation in task forces, working parties, committees, and other advisory bodies (see Section 3.2), and the commissioning of multiple studies by public institutions (see Section 6.6)

illustrates the faculty's involvement in public-sector decision-making. In addition, FEEM organises internal research activities where social and economic impact is a central evaluation criterion (see Section 1.2), and this emphasis is reflected in doctoral education, as PhD candidates are expected to demonstrate the societal and economic relevance of their research during the defence process.

Research Environment and Infrastructures

Experts' statement (p. 4; the 2nd paragraph):

"A weakness of the research environment is that the teaching load remains very high, and the faculty does not have a plan in place to develop and support a more balanced allocation of teaching and research time."

Clarification:

We would like to note that academic workloads are regulated at the national level (for example, teaching workloads of 600-1000 hours for academic staff are prescribed in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 445). In addition, RTU has implemented changes in workload calculation and increased the number of assistants to support senior academic staff in research activities. PhD students also contribute to teaching, thereby reducing the teaching burden for professors. Further details are provided in Section 1.17.

Development Potential

Experts' statement (p. 4; the 5th paragraph):

"The unit's development is vulnerable due to structural dependence on externally funded projects and limited base funding, which restricts long-term staffing, strategic planning, and investment in new research directions."

Clarification:

We would like to note that Table 7.1 shows a stable increase in base funding (from 617 KEUR in 2019 to 916 KEUR in 2024). Competitive research funding has also increased considerably - almost doubling in 2024 compared to 2019 - while private funding has grown severalfold over the same period. RTU is concurrently investing in attracting tenured professors and developing new research directions (see Section 1.10), which contributes to strengthening the faculty's capacity to secure external funding and support long-term research development. Two tenured professors were recruited in 2024, with an additional 1–2 positions planned annually. The university also has a strategic objective to increase the number of international postgraduate and PhD students, further enhancing research capacity and international visibility.

Following the previous evaluation, in which the faculty received an overall score of "3", RTU FEEM undertook a significant reorganisation of its research activities. The faculty consolidated its focus from five research areas to two priority domains and increased targeted investment to support their development. In parallel, FEEM has strengthened interdisciplinary collaboration through joint initiatives with other faculties and by engaging academic staff and students in research and innovation activities. Furthermore, the implementation of a research internationalisation strategy - including

participation in international projects and networks, editorial boards, committees, and the recruitment of international staff and students - has supported the transition from a primarily national profile to a more internationally oriented role. In view of these developments and the progress achieved since the previous evaluation, we kindly request to review the overall score.

Rīgā,
2026.gada 02. februārī

Nr. 1-24/09-26

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Par iebildumiem pret ekspertu grupas atbildi un novērtējuma ziņojuma secinājumiem

Pateicamies jums par nosūtīto ekspertu grupas atbildi un precizēto novērtējuma ziņojuma redakciju.

Vienlaikus esam spiesti norādīt, ka augstskola nevar piekrist ekspertu grupas sniegtajai atbildei pēc būtības, jo tajā nav pilnvērtīgi un sistemātiski izskatīti augstskolas iesniegtajos komentāros un apelācijā norādītie argumenti. Ekspertu grupas atbilde lielā mērā ir vispārīga, fragmentāra un selektīva, daļēji atkārtojot sākotnējā ziņojuma secinājumus, bet nesniedzot skaidras un argumentētas atbildes uz konkrētiem augstskolas iebildumiem.

Īpaši norādām, ka:

1. netiek sniegtas atbildes pēc būtības uz jautājumiem par vērtēšanas kritēriju piemērošanu un to savstarpējo sasaisti ar piešķirtajiem punktiem;
2. nav pietiekami pamatots, kā konkrēti identificētie trūkumi ir noveduši pie kopējā vērtējuma “1 – vāji”, ja vairāki atsevišķi kritēriji ir novērtēti augstāk;
3. augstskolas norādītie metodoloģiskie iebildumi par publikāciju piesaistes izvērtēšanu, institucionālās piederības interpretācijas atbilstību noteiktajiem kritērijiem un izvērtēšanas konsekvenci nav analizēti pēc būtības, bet gan noraidīti vispārīgā veidā;
4. atbildē nav izvērtēts, vai un kā ekspertu secinājumi atbilst vienlīdzīgas attieksmes, proporcionalitātes un labas pārvaldības principiem.
5. uz ekspertu grupas identificētajiem trūkumiem nav sniegtas pilnvērtīgas, konkrētas un pamatotas atbildes vai rekomendācijas, kas ļautu augstskolai skaidri izprast konstatēto problēmu saturu un to novēršanas iespējas.

Uzskatām, ka šādā formā sniegtā atbilde neatrisina augstskolas norādītās problēmas un neveicina skaidrību par ekspertu secinājumu tiesisko un akadēmisko pamatojumu. Līdz ar to augstskola saglabā savu iepriekš pausto viedokli par novērtējuma ziņojuma nepilnībām un par to, ka sniegtās atbildes nav uzskatāmas par pilnvērtīgu reakciju uz iesniegtajiem komentāriem. Ņemot vērā iepriekš minēto, lūdzam šo augstskolas nostāju pievienot novērtējuma ziņojuma pielikumā kā augstskolas oficiālo viedokli par ekspertu grupas ziņojumu.

Ar cieņu,
Rektora p.i.
D.Djakons