

April 2026

University of Latvia Consolidated Institutional Assessment



Final report



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1 Summary of Unit-Level Performance

The scores allocated by the International Evaluation to the individual units are shown in Appendix B. They are remarkably consistent across the units, all of which were given an overall score of 'very good' (4), meaning they are seen as strong international players. All units also scored 4 for research quality. Humanities, Science and Technology and Education Sciences and Psychology additionally scored 4 for impact on their discipline, which is manifested in aspects such as citation by others in the field, leadership of international projects, and international recognition. Medicine, Economics and Social Science and Law scored 'good' (3) – so they have some recognition in the field but there is scope to improve to become stronger international thought leaders.

Disciplinary impact naturally tends to lag research quality, and is likely also to be impeded by Latvia's small size and peripheral location with respect to the world's main research centres. It should be possible to increase it through continued high research and publication quality accompanied by persistent efforts to work within the leading research networks (for example, in the EU Framework Programmes).

Persistence is also important in economic impact, where four of the Faculties were already rated as 'very good' (4). The Faculties of Humanities and of Science and Technology were rated as '3'. The civil society organisations and companies most relevant to them often need one-by-one treatment to generate impact from research, and the small size and the industrial structure of Latvia mean there are few non-academic partners big enough on their own to enable big economic impacts. However, all the Faculties achieved 'very good' societal impact. The Faculty of Law is notable among these for its role in shaping the Latvian legal system and influencing judicial decisions. The Faculty of Science and Technology achieved an 'outstanding' (5) grade.

The International Assessment showed that all the units except Humanities had 'very good' research environments, leaving scope for Humanities to improve from 'good' to 'very good' by increasing the international dissemination of research outputs, particularly beyond Latvian-language publications. And all but Law were rated as 'very good (4) in terms of their development potential, which requires a stronger focus on ensuring that sufficient time and incentives are available for sustained international research collaboration and publication alongside policy-oriented activities.

The consistency of scores across the units, despite their differences in size and discipline, testifies to UL's success in reforming and restructuring in recent years. That said, each score in the International Evaluation represents a broad band of performance. A current and future challenge is to 'level up' faculties within this band – and, in the longer term to raise some scores to '5'.

2 Institutional Context

UL is the largest comprehensive university in Latvia, with about 15,000 students, and is a cornerstone in the structure of Latvian higher education. 1097 (2024) FTE posts across six faculties were in scope to the international evaluation¹. At that time:

¹ Employment data for the six units of assessment are shown in Appendix A.



- Some 57% of the posts were in the natural sciences, medicine and engineering
 - 23% in the Faculty of Medicine and Life Sciences
 - 34% in the Faculty of Science and Technology
- 24% were in the social sciences
 - 13% in the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences
 - 11% in the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology
- 19% were in the humanities and law
 - 15% in the Faculty of Humanities
 - 4% in the Faculty of Law

The assessment period has seen the continuation of a longer-term trend to consolidation at UL, and more broadly within Latvian academia. Employment in the four largest faculties fell by 8-16% during the period, while the Faculty of Economics and Social Science grew by 10% and the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology grew by 6%. In 2024, 45% of the FTEs in the Faculty of Law were researchers, as were 52% of those in the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology, reflecting the importance of their roles in professional training. In the other faculties, the proportion of researchers varied between 71% (Economics and Social Sciences) and 86% (Science and Technology).

UL demonstrates clear institution-level progress, with most recommendations from the previous international evaluation (2019/2020) translated into concrete structural and procedural changes. Implementation of previous evaluation recommendations is strong and well evidenced. The institution responded decisively by consolidating 13 faculties and 15 institutes into six faculties, and creating a single doctoral school. These actions are associated with measurable improvements in research quality, including increased numbers and proportions of Q1/Q2 publications and stronger doctoral involvement in high-level outputs.

UL has defined and implemented an ambitious credible mission, vision, strategy, and governance framework, aligned with national and EU priorities. There is appropriate recognition of the dynamic nature of strategic planning and its limitations; structural reforms, management process changes and revisions of KPIs have been implemented. Research is structured through its clearly articulated strategic document "UL Strategy 2021-2027" and specialisation directions across life sciences, engineering, and social sciences, with units retaining scientific autonomy within the institutional framework. Governance arrangements appear robust, with clear decision-making roles and annual strategy implementation plans at unit level. This structure supports the development of research strategies bottom up. It also makes it possible to create alignment across units, although the effectiveness of interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation transfer varies by domain. The UL institutional report does not reveal mechanisms for exchange of successful approaches and best practices among the units, with the aim to align with the best performers.

UL indicates that it involves the research working level in developing as well as measuring progress against its strategic goals. It has tools in place to encourage faculties' and research colleagues' development and performance that offer a mix of support and performance incentives. It should be noted that the use of performance-based internal funding is a powerful way to reinforce success, but can also lead to unexpected consequences for university structure and careers. For example, strong performance incentives linked to quantitative indicators can concentrate resources in already successful units and encourage short-term optimisation around measurable outputs, with potential effects on disciplinary balance and research careers.

The establishment of the Doctoral School (DS) in 2024, introduction of tenure professorships, internal research grants, and professionalisation of research support (e.g. data curators, strengthened RPDC) demonstrate sustained institutional implementation. The DS was set up to consolidate and strengthen doctoral education across all faculties. It provides institution-wide governance of admissions, supervision standards, progress assessment, and defence



procedures, ensuring consistent quality and transparent processes. Faculties retain responsibility for the scientific content of doctoral programs, disciplinary methodologies, and integration into research groups. This two-level structure combines centralized quality assurance with discipline-specific autonomy. The DS also integrates doctoral students from external research institutes. Research and innovation activities are primarily conducted within faculties, which include both departments and research institutes. Quantitative indicators (e.g. increased doctoral co-authorship in Q1/Q2 publications) suggest positive outcomes, although long-term impacts on completion times and career trajectories remain to be demonstrated.

Finally, the institution has introduced structured processes to monitor and reflect on implementation and progress. Strategy deployment is supported by annual unit-level plans and reports, consolidated at institutional level and linked to performance-based funding allocation. Defined KPIs/objectives provide a formal basis for monitoring, though those listed in UL's self-assessment report could benefit from greater granularity and some additional indicators of excellence, such as data on ERC grants and on the share of the university's articles in various fields that are among the most-cited articles in the journals indexed in SCOPUS or the Web of Science.

3 Overall Institutional Score and Rationale

Assigned overall score: **4 (very good), a strong international player**

Overall, UL shows strong institutional leadership, credible strategic implementation, and improving research performance. The six units were all allocated overall scores of 4. This is a very good performance, of which the university can justifiably be proud. It is becoming, after much restructuring and reform, a strong international player. It is important to note that 'strong international player' covers quite a wide range of performance, within which there is every prospect that UL can advance incrementally.

The sub-scores are mostly fours and those that are not deviate only by one mark. This solid and consistent result is supported by evidence from UL's institutional self-assessment and from the unit level that the university has consolidated to have a simpler organisation than before, with appropriate multi-level governance, transparent vision and missions.

4 Recommendations

Overall, the Chairs of Disciplinary Expert Groups are impressed by UL's performance at institutional and unit levels, including the strategy and what the Chairs of Disciplinary Expert Groups can see of its implementation, and would encourage the university self-critically to carry on. Efforts should focus on levelling up performance across faculties so that most eventually operate towards the top of the range represented by a score of '4' and some attain a level of '5' on some individual sub-scores.

These processes are incremental and take time. Research quality and impact are interdependent but the quality and quantity of research output can be increased more quickly than influence on science. This is not only due to publication and citation lags but also because such influence also depends on building a reputation, networks and increased engagement in international scientific communities, high-profile editorial boards, prominent conferences, ERC evaluation committees, leadership in learned societies, one-off events organised in Riga, and so on. It also takes time for the university to build impact in the economy and society, where it is not only UL's own efforts but also the industrial and societal contexts that influence the extent of impact.

While the overview of governance and strategy provided in the self-assessment report is impressive, it is important to find a good balance between bottom-up initiative and



coordination in university research strategy. Bottom-up forces in strategy-building tend to fragment the overall research effort and often create lock-ins that, for example, make it difficult to realign the research effort as science and the needs of society evolve. Coordination is needed to encourage interdisciplinarity, support needed changes in focus and structure, and enable the university as a whole to address the changing needs of science and society and to differentiate itself in an increasingly competitive international academic context. The current structure is new, and a new strategy is being written during 2026, so UL has opportunities to ensure that this balance is achieved through the involvement of both the centre and the research levels in strategy deployment.

- Raising performance across a whole university is a 'long game'. UL should be persistent in continuously raising expectations through strategy, performance appraisal and support about not only quality but also impact. Both are needed to embed UL properly in international research networks and communities and build leadership positions in research
- Strategy deployment is harder than strategy design. UL should pay particular attention to maintaining dialogue and an appropriate balance of influence between the university leadership and the researchers at all levels, so the strategy evolves as needed to meet the needs of science and society as well as the university's need to differentiate itself in competition
- Performance-based funding is a two-edged sword. It can usefully reinforce short-term success but can also encourage lock-in and needs to be counterbalanced by strategic investments that support development and change, UL should ensure it takes account of both aspects so that it remains highly-performing and relevant
- What you measure is what you get. It is important for efficiency and morale to avoid setting up complicated indicator systems. However, the main performance indicators should capture the ambitions of the organisation, not only measuring but defining them. UL should therefore extend its current KPIs to include a small number of indicators of excellence and impact, both in science and society



Appendix A FTE academic and research staff at units as reported in the self-evaluation reports

	FTE academic and research staff at units as reported in the self-evaluation reports																	
	2019			2020			2021			2022			2023			2024		
Unit	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total
Faculty of Medicine Life Sciences	55.79	225.5	281.29	58.9	220.49	279.39	59.21	233.79	293	58.22	202.46	260.68	57.2	212.02	269.22	62.32	191.76	254.08
Faculty of Humanities	51.94	150.68	202.62	48.14	150.59	198.73	46.21	152.02	198.2	44.06	126.37	170.43	41.89	121.13	163.02	39.56	130.03	169.59
Faculty of Science Technology	46.3	392.6	438.9	45.15	379.47	424.62	44.41	399.86	444.3	46.01	375.28	421.29	48.64	370.94	419.58	50.72	319.94	370.66
Faculty of Economics Social Sciences	40.12	85.75	125.87	36.18	93.85	130.03	36.68	93.82	130.5	35.06	90.72	125.78	35.74	84.16	119.9	40.68	97.84	138.52
Faculty of Law	29.1	16.77	45.87	28.74	18.74	47.48	26.98	20.98	47.96	26.45	20.11	46.56	24.39	21.92	46.31	23.15	19.22	42.37
Faculty of Education Sciences Psychology	61.7	53.51	115.21	63.43	57.57	121	60.82	63.31	124.1	58.42	65.75	124.17	59.33	74.68	134.01	58.21	63.41	121.62



Appendix B Unit scores assigned by disciplinary Expert Groups and Institutional Score

Unit	Unit scores assigned by disciplinary Expert groups						
	Overall score	Quality of research	Impact on the discipline	Economic impact	Social impact	Research environment & infrastructure	Development potential
Faculty of Medicine and Life Sciences	4	4	3	4	4	4	4
Faculty of Humanities	4	4	4	3	4	3	4
Faculty of Science and Technology	4	4	4	3	5	4	4
Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences	4	4	3	4	4	4	4
Faculty of Law	4	4	3	4	4	4	3
Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Assigned overall score: **4 (very good), a strong international player**