

Study Quality Assurance Policy of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

This study quality assurance policy (hereinafter – the Policy) is a part of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (hereinafter – ViA) quality management system, which promotes ViA's internal quality culture and its continuous improvement (refer to Annex 1 for a quality management system). The policy is a part of ViA's strategic management and is publicly available. It is developed, reviewed and implemented in accordance with the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(2015\)](#), the [Law on Higher Education Institutions](#) of the Republic of Latvia and other laws and regulations, at the same time taking into account the views and needs of ViA internal and external stakeholders. The policy supports the development of a quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for the quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels.

1. Study quality assurance policy and its implementation processes

- ViA operates in compliance with external and internal laws and regulations governing higher education.
- ViA has developed a [Strategy](#) which aims to ensure the high-quality implementation of higher education study programmes and their continuous improvement to achieve excellence.
- ViA has a **Strategic Advisory Board** which is established with a goal to encourage creative discussions and generate ideas that will help identify reasonable, attractive and imaginable future visions and strategy of ViA.
- ViA has a **Scientific Council** whose task is to promote coherent and focused academic and scientific research activities in accordance with the ViA strategy. The Council consults and, if necessary, prepares proposals for the Senate and the Rector on strategically important issues of ViA scientific research activities, including initiation of new ViA research directions.
- ViA has developed a **Procedure for the Development, Approval and Supervision of the Study Programmes** (see Annex 2) and other regulations related to the high-quality study process.
- ViA **self-assessment reports** are prepared annually and approved by ViA Senate.
- ViA regularly promotes employee education and training by supporting employee participation in various local and international courses, seminars, conferences, exchange programmes.
- ViA normative acts are approved by ViA Senate, which includes also student self-government representatives – before a normative document is submitted to the Senate for approval, it is assessed by both the faculty and student board.
- Regulations at the faculty level are approved by the faculty councils, which also include student representatives, thus facilitating student involvement in the implementation of various ViA processes and decision-making.

2. Development, approval and updating of the study programmes and their components

- ViA has defined a procedure for the development, approval, monitoring and updating of the study programmes and lifelong learning courses, etc. training programmes (hereinafter referred to as the Programmes) and their components.
- The programmes and their components are developed to meet their goals that are in line with the **ViA strategy**. The programmes are developed using external stakeholders' vision in such a way to meet the defined learning outcomes, and these results, in their turn, comply with the [Latvian and European Qualifications Framework](#) and contribute to the higher education goals – to promote personal growth and employment, formation of civil society and an expanded knowledge base.

- ViA has the **Study Regulations** in place approved by the Senate, which define the procedure for the implementation of the study programmes, the rights and obligations of the students, the procedure for study financing and the general procedure for organizing State examinations.
- Descriptions of the study courses, etc. programme components define requirements for starting acquiring the study course, they define goals and planned learning outcomes, describe the content necessary for achieving learning outcomes, a calendar, compulsory literature, additional literature and other information sources, describe student independent work organization and tasks and define criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes.

3. Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment

- ViA ensures the implementation of the Programmes in such a way as to encourage students to become actively involved in the development of the study process.
- ViA **Study Regulations** set forth student knowledge assessment criteria, forms and terms, conditions for academic debts and other requirements for achieving learning outcomes.
- Criteria, conditions and methods published in the course descriptions are used to evaluate the results achieved by the students, and they are applied consistently.
- **Methodological guidelines** for the development, formatting and defence of the annual projects, Bachelor's theses, Master's theses or Qualification Papers are developed and approved for the development and defence procedure of the annual projects and State examination papers.
- The composition of the State Examination Commission is approved by the Faculty Council, the Commission includes field specialists/experts who act in accordance with the methodological guidelines of the study programme for the development of the State examination papers.
- The **Internship Regulations** define the internship process, conditions for writing and defence of the reports.
- The diversity of student needs is respected during the study process at ViA by choosing appropriate learning approaches. ViA uses innovative teaching methods and implements an individual approach.
- Study programme directors make sure that the lecturers involved in the implementation of the programme are familiar with the methods of assessing learning outcomes and receive support for the development of their skills in this area; assessment criteria and methods, as well as evaluation criteria are made public in advance; an assessment provides for a possibility to show the extent to which students have achieved learning outcomes; students receive feedback from the lecturers who provide advice on the study and research process, if necessary; assessing is consistent, fair to all students and is carried out in accordance with the approved course descriptions. Appropriate procedures – ViA **Study Regulations** and the **Ethics Regulations** – are in place for resolving student complaints.

4. Matriculation of students, study process, recognition of qualifications and certification

- Admission requirements are defined in **ViA Admission Rules** which are available on ViA website.
- ViA has a procedure in place for the recognition of formal learning outcomes achieved through prior education, as well as for the [recognition of learning outcomes](#) acquired through professional experience and outside formal education.
- ViA uses the [Study Administration System](#) (LAIS) which contains all study information on each student and his/her study process, including information of those students who have dropped out.
- Upon successful completion of the study programme, a student receives a diploma which complies with the requirements of the regulatory enactments and contains information on learning outcomes and the qualification acquired, as well as on the context, level, content and status of the studies acquired.

5. Quality assurance and assessment of the work of the academic staff

- ViA has measures in place to make sure and verify that the lecturers working with students have required qualifications and competences, i.e.:

- requirements are laid down in the ViA **Regulations on Elections to Academic Positions**;
- ViA **Remuneration Regulations** contain the division of academic work, conditions for research work;
- student surveys on each study course in the respective semester.
- ViA Senate has approved the **content and duties of the lecturers' work**, which determine requirements for academic work, research, academic and scientific qualification improvement and administrative work.
- In accordance with the Cabinet Regulations of the Republic of Latvia *On Education Required for Teachers and Procedures for Improvement of Professional Qualifications and Teacher Professional Competence*, professional improvement may include international mobility in accordance with the goals of professional development, participation in projects, conferences and seminars as evidenced by the documents issued.
- In order to ensure the qualification, work quality improvement and professional development of ViA academic staff, the lecturer is given a possibility to improve and expand his/her knowledge and professionalism by acquiring experience abroad or by doing internship in foreign higher education institutions/organizations and by participating in relevant seminars and conferences – Erasmus and other mobility programmes.
- Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences implements the following activities in order to enable the lecturers to improve their academic work and to monitor the quality of their academic work:
 - at the end of each study course a student survey is conducted, a summary of the results is sent to the lecturer and the head of the study direction;
 - once per academic year, lecturer's lectures are visited by a colleague, who afterwards provides feedback. Once per academic year, a lecturer visits a lecture of another colleague;
 - at the end of the academic year, the lecturer summarizes conclusions resulting from the study course evaluations and the experience of the visited lecturers and writes a summary of his/her academic performance, which is discussed with the head of the study direction. If the lecturers wish so, academic performance is discussed at the meeting of the study council;
 - if the head of the study direction identifies persistent or serious problems in the academic performance of the lecturer, the required professional improvement measures are discussed with the lecturer, including the necessity for a mentor or a consultant at the choice of the lecturer. If the professional improvement does not give a positive result, the head of the study direction will contact the dean to jointly address the issue.
- Once per academic year (in October for the previous academic year), the lecturer has to report to the Dean of the Faculty on the achievements in scientific work, experience gained in projects, seminars and conferences. The information provided is used for the preparation of a scientific report and self-assessment reports of the study directions.

6. Resources of academic work and research, support for students

- ViA material and technical base and infrastructure ensure that the resources available to students for the acquisition of knowledge are appropriate and suitable for each study programme offered.
- ViA library provides information resources necessary for academic and scientific activities, access to scientific articles and other electronic information data bases from the ViA library portal.
- ViA has an accessible e-learning environment – an interactive student support environment, which includes study materials, electronic document exchange and communication with a lecturer, a possibility to submit test papers.
- Two buildings with a total area of 7312 m² which are at the disposal of ViA are used for ensuring ViA study process, scientific, research and administrative activities. 2387 m² are used directly in the study and research process. The current study base consists of 38 lecture rooms (total area of 1445 m²), including 3 computer rooms with 90 workstations and the Internet connection (195 m²) and 12 laboratories: *Data Security Laboratory (Cyber Security Laboratory); Computer Network Laboratory; Virtual Reality Laboratory; material values of the Multimedia Laboratory intended for*

the study administration and technology research direction; material values of the Multimedia Laboratory intended for the communication ecosystems and technology research direction; Laboratory of Simulation Modelling and RFID Technologies; Mobile Technology Laboratory; Energy Efficiency Laboratory; Mechatronics Laboratory; Electrical Engineering Laboratory; Construction Laboratory; Spatial Research Laboratory (total area of 324 m²). All computers are connected in a common network that provides a unified information flow, as well as an access to the Internet and databases. Subscribed full-text databases are accessible through authorization from any place where the Internet is available. A conference room (257 m²) is also used in the study process, and the study blocks have rooms for group work and premises where students can carry out their independent study assignments (350 m²).

- Booking and reservation system of premises, lecture-rooms and hostels provides for a possibility to follow the lecture schedule.
- ViA provides career development services to students and applicants, enabling them to decide on their future education or employment, to find the most appropriate study direction, to choose the most appropriate ways for the development of competences by using both personal and ViA's resources, to prepare for successful professional development, to develop their personalities by achieving their professional goals, to plan further education, to start their own business, and to support other career issues. The main career development activities at ViA are individual or small group career consultations for students (including advice on writing CV, employment search, preparation for job interviews, etc.), as well as consultations for applicants on the most appropriate study direction for starting studies at ViA. A mentoring movement is also being developed, involving ViA graduates. ViA closely cooperates with the companies within the industry and regularly informs students on the current employment and internship offers at the companies, as well as helps students prepare for work and internship. Career development support is also fully integrated into the study courses, raising awareness of employment in the industry, cooperating with industry experts and specialists.

7. Information management

- ViA key performance indicators are assessed and analyzed on an annual basis and reflected in self-assessment reports, annual management reports and other documents.
- Information on the student progress, academic achievements and drop-out rates, student satisfaction with the study programmes, and graduate career is summarized in a centralized manner.
- Gathering of information is a continuous process, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used – statistical and financial analysis, document analysis, as well as surveys of applicants, students and graduates.
- ViA ensures efficient collection of information necessary for the management of study programmes and other processes through ViA website and social networks, as well as through:
 - ViA study administration information system (www.lais.lv), which provides a possibility to collect data on all aspects of studies and successfully use them in the study process,
 - Record Keeping System (<https://lietvediba.va.lv>),
 - E-learning environment Moodle (<https://moodle.va.lv/>),
 - ViA alumni database,
 - Library system ALISE,
 - Accounting system Horizon,
 - Study and student loan accounting system.

8. Information to the public

- ViA regularly publishes current, neutral and impartial information on its website on its activities, including information on the college, Bachelor's, Master's, and higher level study programmes offered, the degrees/qualifications to be acquired and selection criteria for admission; expected

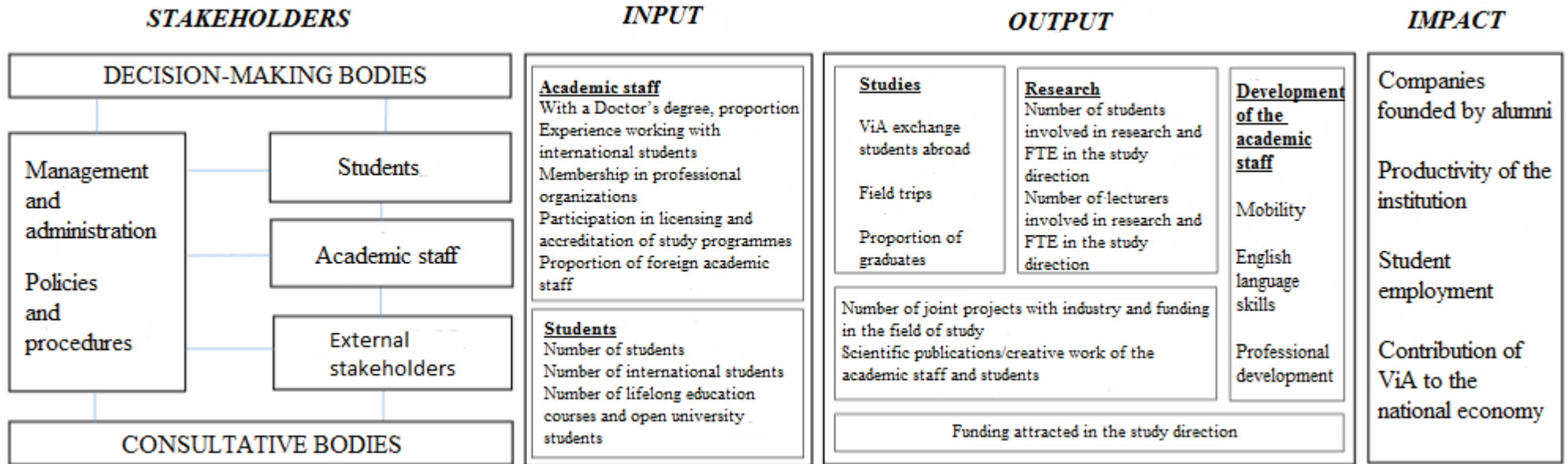
learning outcomes of the programmes, qualifications to be awarded, teaching, learning and result assessment procedures used, the minimum satisfactory assessments, learning opportunities available to students and extracurricular activities, and information on career possibilities after graduation and graduate employment.

- Each year ViA prepares, approves and publishes self-assessment reports of the study directions, as well as admission rules for the current academic year. ViA lecturers and employees are actively involved in the development of public opinion in the region and Latvia by participating in conferences, seminars, public lectures, NGO activities, by publishing scientific publications; the most up-to-date information is posted on the ViA social media accounts and website, thus promoting higher education and study programmes.
- ViA regularly posts up-to-date, neutral and impartial information on its activities, programmes offered and degrees/qualifications to be acquired on social media – *Facebook, Twitter, draugiem.lv, Instagram, YouTube*, as well as distributes printed leaflets and other handouts. Besides, information that is relevant to current and future students, alumni, and other stakeholders and the public is posted on social media in Latvian and English. Information that is relevant to a specific person or group of people, such as lecturers, ViA's administration staff, or students of a particular study programme, is emailed.
- A contact with ViA alumni is maintained by help of the *Facebook* group "ViA Alumni", where ViA posts up-to-date information that is relevant to the graduates, such as employment possibilities at ViA, gatherings, possible participation in events.
- Media of the industry and other media at the regional and national level are also informed about ViA's activities and current events, inviting them to distribute information to the general public through print and electronic media and/or on social media accounts. Besides, media representatives are provided with relevant information on current events, developments and news related to ViA, its staff, or students. Media monitoring is carried out on a daily basis, and information about ViA and current events published in the media is collected. Upon assessing the relevance and appropriateness of the information, it is re-posted on the institution's social media accounts.
- In order to popularize study directions, lecturers, students and graduates are interviewed both in a written and video format, interviews are published on the ViA website, as well as posted on social media – *Facebook, Twitter, draugiem.lv, Instagram* and *YouTube*. Besides, to popularize study directions, ViA's website and social media accounts feature information on students' individual work, achievements in the area of science, conferences, competitions, as well as on the study process and possibilities to improve their knowledge in ViA laboratories, during internship at companies, through courses offered by ViA, classes, creative workshops, etc.
- In order to ensure ViA publicity outside Latvia, information on ViA study programmes and possibilities for joint projects is presented to foreign cooperation partners within the framework of the mobility programmes.

9. Programme monitoring and periodic review

- Study programmes are assessed continuously throughout the year, while the final evaluation is the annual self-assessment report for a particular academic year.
- At the end of each study course, the course is assessed providing for a possibility to improve its content and/or structure.
- Since ViA is focused on the implementation of vocational education, close cooperation is maintained with employers during students' internship, as well as by involving employers in the work of the State Examination Commission.
- Current issues of the industry (including the final self-assessment report) are discussed on a regular basis in the study programme councils, faculty general meetings and councils and, if necessary, proposals are also made for changes in the content of the study programme.
- Advisory boards are formed for the purpose of involving external parties and reviewing study programmes.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



Procedure for the development, approval and supervision of the study programmes at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

The process to be controlled	Process description	Time, regularity	Responsible executive	Regulatory enactments
Initiation of the study programmes and proceeding with their development	<p>Research on the necessity of the study programme, its integration into ViA, regional and national education and economic development policy</p> <p>ViA Senate approves or rejects the application of the Faculty Council to start the development of the study programme</p> <p>A working group is established for the development of the programme</p>	As required	Vice-rector for academic and scientific work Council of the study direction	<p><i>Education Law;</i></p> <p><i>Law on Higher Education Institutions;</i></p> <p><i>Cabinet Regulations No.141 “Regulations regarding the State Standard for First Level Professional Higher Education” of 20.03.2001;</i></p>
Development of the draft study programmes	The working group develops the draft study programme and submits it to the Faculty Council for assessment	As required	Head of the working group	<p><i>Cabinet Regulations No. 512 “Regulations on the State Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education” of 26.08.2014;</i></p>
Approval of the director of the study direction or study programme	The Council of the study direction submits a proposal to the Faculty Council for the approval of the director of the study direction or programme	As required	Council of the study direction Faculty Council	<p><i>Cabinet Regulations No. 240 “Regulations on the State Academic Education Standard” of 13.05.2014;</i></p>
Approval of the study programmes and proceeding with its licensing	The Faculty Council submits a proposal to the Senate for the approval of the study programme description and proceeding with its licensing	As required	Faculty Council ViA Senate	<p><i>Cabinet Regulations No. 793 “Regulations on Opening and Accreditation of the Study Directions” of 11.12.2019;</i></p>
Study course descriptions and their updating	<p>Course descriptions are approved by the Faculty Council along with the description of the study programme for licensing or accreditation, as well as when changes in the content of the study programme and annual self-assessment reports are approved. After the decision of the Faculty Council, descriptions of the study programmes for licensing or accreditation and a self-assessment report are submitted to ViA Senate for review and approval.</p>	As required	Directors of the study direction/study programmes Council of the study direction	<p><i>Cabinet Regulations No. 794 “Accreditation Regulations of the Higher Education Institutions and Colleges” of 11.12.2018;</i></p>
	<p>Upon planning the study course implementation, a lecturer develops a course description in an electronic format (in accordance with the study course description form determined by ViA) in Latvian and English and submits it to the director of the respective study direction and/or study programme who submits it for reviewing and approval by the Council of the study direction 5 working days before the beginning of the semester. If necessary, the course description is updated and submitted electronically to the senior specialist of the respective study direction 5 working days before the beginning of the course.</p> <p>An audit of the study programme course descriptions – updating and improvement – is carried out every year at the beginning of the academic year.</p>	Once per year Once per year		<p><i>Cabinet Regulations No. 795 “Licensing Regulations of the Study Programmes” of 11.12.2018;</i></p>
Assessment of the study programme implementation quality/Assessment and updating of the study programme content	The Faculty Council and the Senate approve the annual self-assessment report of the study direction/programme	Every year – November	Directors of the study direction/study programmes Faculty Council	<p><i>ViA Faculty Regulations;</i></p>
	Feedback from the internship supervisors of the industry companies	After internship is over	Directors of the study direction/study	<p><i>Regulations of ViA Scientific</i></p>

			programmes Study administration group ¹	<p><i>Council;</i> <u>Internal normative acts of the Quality Agency for Higher Education;</u> <i>ViA Study Regulations;</i> <i>ViA Internship Regulations</i> <i>ViA Regulations on Convention of Counsellors</i> <i>Content and duties of lecturers' work</i> <i>ViA Regulations of Ethics</i> <i>Rector's order No.149-s "On Establishing of the Working Groups for the Development of the Study Programme Advisory Councils and Self-Assessment Reports" of 12.03.2018, as amended on 09.09.2019, No.382-s</i> <i>Rector's order No. 196-s "On the Course Description Form" of 21.05.2018.</i></p>
Student surveys on the assessment of the study courses and lecturers	At the end of each semester	Senior specialists of the study directions Study administration group ²		
Student surveys on ViA infrastructure	Once per year	Study administration group ³		
Graduate surveys	At least once per year (for graduates of the previous year) Every 3 years after graduation	Study administration group		
Employer surveys on ViA graduates	Every 3 years	Directors of the study direction/study programmes Study administration group		
Specialists of the State Examination Commission provide opinions, recommendations on the quality of the Bachelor's and Master's theses	Once per year	Directors of the study direction/study programmes		
Assessment of international cooperation	Once per year	International cooperation group		
Recommendations of the Convention of Counsellors	Once per year	Dean		
External assessment – accreditation	Once per 6 years or once per 2 years	Directors of the study direction/study programmes		

¹ From 1 September 2020

² From 1 September 2020

³ From 1 September 2020