

## **Description of the Study Programme Public Health (Academic Master's Programme)**

2015/2016

### **1. Title of the study programme, degree, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification, aims and tasks.**

Academic Master's programme Public Health, degree awarded: **Master's degree of Health Sciences in Health Care**

Aim of the study programme – to prepare highly qualified specialists for independent research and evidence-based work in various medical practice spheres such as epidemiology, environmental and occupational health, health promotion, healthcare organisation, health statistics, etc., possessing fundamental theoretical knowledge and practical skills relevant to both public health and research methods. Likewise, to provide for studies applicable in public health practice and based on theoretical basis of public health science in compliance with the guidelines prepared by the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER<sup>1</sup>) on public health education<sup>2</sup>, thereby promoting development and improvement of public health area as a science and practice.

Tasks for achievement of the study programme aims: 1) to provide students with possibility to gain in-depth theoretical knowledge in public health and research methodology; 2) to develop skills and abilities for gathering, processing and analysing data necessary to carry out research; 3) to develop skills to interconnect the theoretical knowledge and research results with public health practice (interaction of theory and practice); 4) to facilitate use of theoretical and research findings in evidence-based public health practice; 5) to develop analytical skills and abilities in detecting public health problem situations, development, implementation and assessment of public health programmes/policies; 6) to facilitate independent decision making, communication and cooperation skills; 7) to provide additional knowledge during elective study courses in order to create a multi-sectoral cooperation to solve specific public health problems; 8) to facilitate students' participation in research (projects, conferences, publications); 9) to foster graduates' competitiveness in both Latvian and European Union labour markets; 7) to prepare students for further doctoral studies.

### **2. Expected outcomes of the study programme.**

Upon successful completion of the academic Master's study programme Public Health, the graduate shall achieve the following study outcomes<sup>3</sup>:

**Knowledge:** 1. Ability to demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of the multi-factor causes and necessity for multi-

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<sup>1</sup> The Association of schools of public health in the European region (ASPHER) <http://www.aspher.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Birt, Anders Foldspang (2011) ASPHER'S European public health core competences programme: philosophy, process and vision

<sup>3</sup> The outcomes of the study programme have been developed in accordance with the description of 7th level Latvian learning outcomes.

sectoral solutions to public health issues. 2. Has learned theories used in public health and understands their use in research and practice. **3.** In-depth knowledge of theoretical guidelines of scientific research work methods. **4.** Ability to demonstrate understanding of prevalence of diseases in the population, their causes and causal links.

**Skills:** 1. Ability to identify and justify public health problems. 2. Ability to determine and apply the relevant scientific approaches in research of the particular public health issue. 3. Ability to carry out research activity by completing all the research stages. 4. Ability to model and test public health causality of events and conditions. 5. Ability to practically apply the most suitable method and solution to prevention of public health issue. 6. Ability to justify, demonstrate and defend own opinion on public health issue determinants and strategies of influence, to participate in debates. 7. Ability to work in group for development of collective solutions in compliance with the ethical aspects of professional activity.

**Competences:** 1. Able to make evidence-based decisions in public health science and practice. 2. Assesses the prospective impact of the decisions on public health, sets the aims for further action. 3. Justifies defining proposals for amendments of a legislative, structural and organisational nature. 4. Able to gain new knowledge and follow the development of public health area after completed studies and contribute to it. 5. Able to work in both local and international scientific public health projects and to develop cooperation with professionals of other areas, when necessary, and integrate knowledge of multiple areas in solving a scientific problem. 6. Within master's thesis demonstrates the ability to carry out scientific work independently, to state and analyse the topical public health issues independently, gather scientific syllabus, develop the conceptual model, select the most suitable solution to obtain the data necessary to solve an issue, process the data, summarize the information obtained, analyse it and give his/her own assessment, as well as present it in the form of academic writing.

The content of the study programme is created so that after completing the compulsory courses and restricted elective courses the post-graduate students will have achieved the aforementioned learning outcomes. The total length of the study programme is 80 CP, of which theoretical study courses constitute 60CP and master's thesis - 20 CP.

The content of the study programme complies with public health education guidelines developed by Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER<sup>4</sup>).

These are full-time studies and one credit point corresponds to 40 academic hours.

**3. Admission requirements (specify admission requirements of the study programme). If the programme is implemented in a foreign language, applicant's language proficiency should be tested. Specify the link on RSU website with the relevant information.**

**Admission regulations** state that applicants wishing to enrol in master's study programme must have completed the following education: Bachelor's degree or second level professional higher education in health care, medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, natural sciences, environmental sciences, food science, social sciences or equivalent higher education. Selection of Master's programme students is based on: 1) a written essay with epidemiological task on a topical public health issue, written on site during entrance

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<sup>4</sup> The Association of schools of public health in the European region (ASPHER) <http://www.aspher.org/>

examination, demonstrating both applicant's knowledge and understanding; 2) an interview demonstrating applicant's motivation.

Admission regulations are available on RSU homepage:

[http://www.rsu.lv/images/stories/dokumenti/uznemsana/Uznemsanas\\_noteikumi\\_magistrantura\\_2016\\_17\\_rev.pdf](http://www.rsu.lv/images/stories/dokumenti/uznemsana/Uznemsanas_noteikumi_magistrantura_2016_17_rev.pdf)

Admission requirements for international students are available here: <http://www.rsu.lv/eng/study-here/post-graduate/public-health>

Admission regulations fully comply with the multi-professional nature of public health profile.

Previous experience of the study programme gained starting from 2000, proves that students possessing the preliminary knowledge stated in admission regulations are able to successfully adapt to the study process. Student admission is carried out in accordance with the Admission Regulations approved by RSU Senate for the respective academic year and external laws and regulations. According to Paragraph 3 of the Cabinet Regulations No 846 of 10 October 2006 "Regulations regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedure for Admission to Study Programmes", the rules for admission to study programmes (hereinafter referred to as the admission rules) for the next academic year shall be drawn, approved and published (also on the website) each year by 1 November.

The technical procedure for admission is drafted and described in Paragraph 7.1 of RSU Process Description No 7 "Service Provision for Students".

RSU applicants apply electronically on website <http://www.rsu.lv/studiju-iespejas/uznemsana>;

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According to Cabinet Regulations No. 36 "*Regulations Regarding Recognition of the Study Results Achieved in Previous Education or Professional Experience*", a person is entitled to submit an application to Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU) regarding recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired in previous education or professional experience in a study programme or part thereof implemented by the university.

Decision on recognition of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience is made by the Commission on Recognition of Study Results Achieved in Previous Education or Professional Experience established by the university. Its rights, duties, rules of formation, as well as specific conditions of the procedure for recognition of study results achieved in previous education or professional experience are established in the *Regulations on Recognition of Study Results*

*Achieved in Previous Education or Professional Experience at Rīga Stradiņš University.*

To start recognition of the learning outcomes, the following should be submitted to the Commission on Recognition of Study Results Achieved: an application; documents confirming the learning outcomes in the previous education or professional experience; a bank payment order for the payment made.

The application is examined and the decision is made within one month from the date of receipt of the application.

**4. Curriculum of the study programme (list of study courses and study modules, their volume in credit points, their division into compulsory, restricted elective or free elective parts by specifying their volume in credit points, plan of their implementation).**

The content of programme is implemented as full-time studies of 2 academic years (4 semesters) and the total volume of it is 80 CP (120 ECTS). In accordance with RSU process description No 35 Organisation of Study Process, a form D-1 “Curriculum of the Study Programme for the Academic Year” was developed and the study work is planned in compliance with it (see the following table).

**Curriculum overview for the academic Master’s study programme Public Health for the academic year 2015/2016**

Course Title	Category	CP	1st year of studies		2nd year of studies	
			1st semester	2nd semester	3rd semester	4th semester
Research Methodology	Comp.	6	6/Exam	-		
Theory of Public Health	Comp.	4	4/Exam	-		
Global Problems in Public Health	Comp.	2	2/Exam			
Epidemiology II	Comp.	6	2	4/Exam		
Qualitative Research Methods	Comp.	6	-	6/Exam		
Statistics II	Comp.	6	-	6/Exam		
Epidemiology I	Elect.	2	2/Exam	-		
Intercultural Communication	Elect.	2	2/Exam	-		

and Research Methods			m			
Development of Social Susceptibility: Pedagogical View	Elect.	2	2/Exam	-		
Statistics I	Elect.	2	2/Exam	-		
Health Pedagogy	Elect.	2	2/Exam			
Healthcare Economics	Elect.	2	-	2/Exam		
Stress Management	Elect.	2	-	2/Exam		
Social Security System in Latvia	Elect.	2	-	2/Exam		
Management of Health Care	Comp.	4			4/Exam	-
Health Promotion Policy and Practice	Comp.	4			4/Exam	-
Professional Ethics	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Environment Quality Modelling	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Environment, Occupational Health and Occupational Medicine	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Psychosocial Issues in Workplace	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Monitoring Emergency Epidemiological Situations	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Project Management	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Use of Registers in Research	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Medical Law	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Communication and Public Relations	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Administration of Environment	Elect.	2			2/Exam	-
Master's Thesis	Comp.	20			-	20/Defence

Study programme consists of compulsory and restricted-elective study courses, as well as master's thesis (see the following table).  
Basic parts of the study programme:

Table 2

Study Courses	Volume in LV credit points	ECTS credit points
Compulsory study courses (Category A)	38	57
Restricted elective study courses (Category B)	36 (of which the student selects study courses with the total volume of 22 CP)	54 (of which the student selects study courses with the total volume of 33 CP)
Master's Thesis (category A)	20	30
<b>IN TOTAL:</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>120</b>

The compulsory content of studies in the volume of 58 CP (72.5% of the total CPs) includes both research of theoretical findings in public health area and their approbation in the context of public health issues. The outline of the study programme provides that majority of the compulsory study courses are taught during the first year of studies; while students may choose several restricted elective study courses during the autumn semester of the second year of studies (see the following table).

**Study programme outline by study years**

Study year	Study courses taught, their areas
<b>I year of studies</b>	A (compulsory) category study courses are aimed at providing theoretical and practical knowledge for research in public health sphere: <i>Public Health Theory; Epidemiology (II); Research Methodology; Qualitative Research Methods; Statistics (II); Global Public Health Issues.</i> B (restricted elective) study courses: <i>Health Pedagogy; Epidemiology (I); Statistics (I); Healthcare Economics; Cross-cultural Communication and Research Methods; Development of Social Susceptibility; Pedagogical View; Stress Management; Social Security Systems in Latvia.</i>
<b>II year of studies</b>	A (compulsory) category study courses: <i>Healthcare Management; Health Promotion Policy and Practice.</i> B (restricted elective) study courses are aimed at providing in-depth knowledge in various topical public health areas: <i>Medical Law; Professional Ethics; Environment, Occupational Health and Occupational Medicine; Communication and Public Relations; Psychosocial Issues in Workplace; Monitoring Emergency Epidemiological Situations; Project Management; Utilizing Registers in Research; Environment Quality</i>

	<p><i>Management.</i></p>
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	<p>Master's thesis is written and defended. Master's thesis is a research paper in public health science or any of its sub-fields, and the Master's degree candidate demonstrates his/her abilities in scientific research and draws independent scientific conclusions.</p>
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The process of the study programme is organised in accordance with the needs for in-depth and specific knowledge in the theory and practice of public health. *In the academic year 2015/2016, the course Global Public Health Issues (previously elective) became a restricted elective course determined by the rapid development of globalisation and migration processes worldwide and the related necessity to solve public health issues. Aspects of globalisation including health of migrants in public health education, is also among ASPHER priorities.*

**5. Practical implementation of the study programme: Study methods and forms, distance learning methods. Assessment system (educational criteria and assessment methods for reaching and assessing learning outcomes, test forms and procedure).**

Several study methods are used by lecturers in the practical implementation of study programme.

**Interactive lectures (including discussions)** are aimed at involving students in active learning, participation in identification of topical public health issues, analysing them and offering a solution, discussing the research opportunities in public health area, in-depth understanding of the role of evidence-based decisions in public health policy and practice.

- **Classes, seminars (including case analyses).** More complex subjects are discussed in seminars and classes, including training practical skills. Case analysis method is crucial in public health education, since it helps to develop critical thinking and train analytical skills. During a case analysis, different topical public health problem situations are reviewed and students are taught to look for complex solutions when researching a particular public health problem, for example, develop a conceptual research model, suggest the optimal approach to a health promotion programme, process complicated statistical data, perform case analyses in medical law and professional ethics, etc.

- **Small group work** (3-4 students per group) is used to improve the communication and dialogue making skills, to practise skills of expressing an opinion clearly when analysing various problem situations and cases.

- **Student's independent work** is 50% of the total study volume. Form, organisation and test of the students' independent work are determined and monitored by the head of the study course and the involved lecturers. Types of independent work are: reasoned essay on a public health issue; a detailed development of conceptual research model; summary of research literature; solution of epidemiological and statistical tasks; writing a report, etc. Study materials for improvement of students' independent work are placed on e-learning environment. Student's independent work is assessed and the score is included in the total study course assessment received at the end of the study course.

- **Studies on e-platform.** On the e-platform (Moodle), students both receive lecture materials and texts used in the particular study

course and create and submit their independent assignments devoted to the analysis of specific public health issues.

Assessment of students' achievements is based on the following principles:

- **Transparency of knowledge and skills assessment**, i.e., at the beginning of the study course, information on the set of requirements to be fulfilled in order to receive a positive assessment is made available to the students.
- **Principle of mandatory assessment**: a student has to receive positive assessment on acquisition of the content of the programme, at least "almost good" (4 points).
- **Variety of tests**: different types of tests are used in the study programme to assess the learning outcomes. These may include written tests, assignments, case studies, projects, etc., which are given in course descriptions.
- **Conformity**: provides that a student shall have the opportunity to demonstrate their analytical, creative, and research abilities, as well as ability to apply the learned skills. Requirements for exams and tests are set by the head of the relevant study course and approved in a meeting of the respective academic unit.

**Student learning outcomes are assessed as follows:**

- **During the semester** the students' knowledge is tested and assessed based on the results of individual study work, using such assessment methods as test work, knowledge control tests, reports, essays, research project development and presentation, etc. Participation and quality of work during lectures, seminars and practical classes is also crucial. Test types motivate the students to work regularly and systematically, and allow the lecturer to ascertain the level of the course material learned.
- **Examinations after completion of the study course**: On completion of the study course, the achieved learning outcomes are assessed either by the exam or test. The final assessment of the study course may include assessment of the student's work during entire course, i.e., cumulative assessment.
- **After completion the study programme**: a student writes and defends a master's thesis as an individual research paper in public health science. Master's thesis is assessed both by the reviewer and the Master's Thesis assessment Commission.

At the end of all study courses, a student has to get assessment confirming the level of the achieved learning outcomes. The heads of study courses develop an examination assessment algorithm approved in the session of the relevant academic unit. Same assessment algorithm is applied to all students. Assessment methods must correspond to study course content and be able to measure the learning outcomes. The form M-3(5) Study Course Guidebook contains the planned study course outcomes, as well as assessment criteria and test types.

Testing of students' knowledge and skills may be organised in different ways, depending on the specific nature of the study course. This may include test work, reports, colloquia, class tests, theoretical tests, exams, cumulative exams, state examination, defence of research projects, qualification papers, bachelor's and master's theses. Different test forms may be used in **exams and theoretical tests**: written or oral examination; computer-based examination; combined examination. Student's independent work may be the following: an assignment, a report, an essay, a case study, situation analysis and assessment, reading and analysis of research publications, summary and evaluation of factual material, creation of a project or a programme, laboratory work, etc. RSU



Academic Regulations contain a detailed description of organisation of exams and theoretical tests, examination taking requirements, and possibility of appeal.

Student is eligible to submit an appeal if he/she finds the given assessment unsatisfactory (disagrees with it)<sup>5</sup> and/or lodge a complaint<sup>6</sup> regarding assessment methods.

**6. Analysis of strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats of the study programme:**

<b>Advantages and problems due to internal and external factors</b>	
<b>Internal factors</b>	
<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The only Master’s level study programme in public health in Latvia.</li> <li>2. Experienced and qualified teaching staff.</li> <li>3. International cooperation of academic staff, recognition, involvement in research and expert work in Latvia and abroad.</li> <li>4. Competitiveness of the graduates in labour market, as well as possibilities to find employment in the field due to the small number of specialists.</li> <li>5. Democratic relationships between lecturers and students.</li> <li>6. Including students in the activities of Student Council, Board of the Faculty of Public Health and Social Welfare, Quality Board of the Public Health study programme, participation in research and international exchange programmes.</li> <li>7. Good cooperation and ensured continuity among bachelor, master's and doctoral level study programmes.</li> <li>8. Participation in the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region ensures introduction of international education standards.</li> </ol>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A small number of state-funded study places.</li> <li>2. Relatively high average workload for permanent lecturers at the profiling department.</li> <li>3. Complicated planning of the learning process due to external lecturers who implement specific study courses.</li> <li>4. The wide scope and variety of sub-directions within the public health study direction.</li> <li>5. Different levels of preliminary knowledge between the students who graduated from public health bachelor’s programme and the students holding a bachelor’s degree from other education institutions.</li> <li>6. Economic situation of students forcing the majority of them to combine work and their studies.</li> </ol>
<b>External factors</b>	
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attracting means from EU funds for development of academic work and infrastructure.</li> <li>2. Attracting more funding for research projects in which postgraduate</li> </ol>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Potential decrease in the number of students due to demographics and economic crisis.</li> <li>2. Variety of study programmes creates competition in terms</li> </ol>

<sup>5</sup> Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU) Study Regulations I Article 10. Submission and hearing of appeal

<sup>6</sup> Process Description No. 31 Receipt and handling of complaints and suggestions, activities aimed at improving management system

<p>students are involved.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Possibility of further developing cooperation between academic education and practice in public health by involving the leading public health specialists in both implementation of the study process and state examinations.</li> <li>4. Possibility to implement the study programme in English.</li> <li>5. Development of new education forms: e-learning, outcome-based and skill-centred education.</li> <li>6. International student exchange within the ERASMUS programme.</li> </ol>	<p>of attracting students.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Reorganisation of public health institutions, decrease in number of potential job opportunities.</li> <li>4. Possibly unbalanced national policy in terms of funding the higher education and distribution of state-funded study places in relation to healthcare sector.</li> <li>5. Unpredictable reforms in higher education.</li> <li>6. Insufficient funding for scientific projects.</li> </ol>
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**7. Employment prospective of programme graduates by including references to information sources to justify the statements.**

In accordance with the data of State Revenue Service, the graduates of the Public Health Master's programme are among the 3 best-paid specialties at RSU who work in the public sector and are registered as tax-payers. Alumni of the year 2012 are all employed within the field.

A survey conducted among the postgraduate students in 2015 demonstrated that already in the first year of studies 6 out of 10 students were employed in a sphere related to public health, while all 11 second year students were employed and 9 of them in a sphere related to public health (among institutions offering most employment options are Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (3 students), Health Inspection (2 students), National Health Service (1 student), medical institutions (4 students), Rehabilitation centre (2 students), insurance company (1 student), and Ministry of Health (2 students).

A survey of graduates was conducted after the graduation day. This survey aimed at finding out graduates' satisfaction with choice of higher education institution and study programme, quality assessment, as well as other aspects related to the study programme and its organisation. In total, nine graduates of the academic year 2015/2016 participated in the survey. The survey was anonymous and electronic. The questionnaire can be found in the annex. The result obtained demonstrates that the students of the academic Master's study programme are in general satisfied both with their choice of the higher education institution and the study programme, as well as the quality of studies: 7 students responded that they were very satisfied with their choice of the higher education institution, 2 students – somewhat satisfied. 7 students responded that they were very satisfied with their choice of the study programme, 2 students – somewhat satisfied. 6 students rated the study quality as very good, 2 students as good, and 2 students as satisfactory. 8 respondents indicated that during the entire study programme there had not been a single course the level of which was unsatisfactory. 1 student had a difficulty to say whether there had been a study course of unsatisfactory teaching level.

4 respondents rated the lecture and class planning as very good, while 5 respondents as good. Seminars, lectures and work in

small groups received the highest rating among the study forms applied (8 respondents – satisfied, 1 – somewhat satisfied). The same rating was given to the independent work, while 6 graduates were satisfied with the research work and 3 respondents were somewhat satisfied.

During the last semester of the master's programme, students write their master's thesis, and the topic is approved by the Quality Board of the Public Health study programme and the Faculty Board. Topical public health issues are chosen for master's thesis allowing to assess both the student's ability to carry out scientific work independently: to define and analyse topical public health issues, provide a summary of research literature, develop the conceptual model, select the most suitable method for gathering data required to solve a problem, process the data, summarize the information gathered, analyse it, evaluate and present the results in the form of an academic text, and also demonstrate skills in identifying and justifying public health issues, demonstrate understanding of multi-factor origins of the public health issues and justify the need for multi-sectoral solutions, make evidence-based decisions in both public health science and practice.

#### **8. Introduction of proposals (if applicable) given within the framework of the licensing of the study programme during the previous accreditation (if applicable).**

During the previous accreditations, the programme received a full accreditation period, i.e., 6 years. No recommendations were received for amendments to the study programme.

#### **9. Information on external relations:**

##### **9.1. Cooperation with employers and professional organisations in Latvia and abroad.**

The study programme is implemented in cooperation with the Public Health Association of Latvia and the employers. This cooperation is implemented as follows: 1) external lecturers who are employed temporarily by RSU or are involved in implementation of a particular study course, particular lectures or practical classes, and who are professionals in their field, are well aware of the topical problems in public health, methods of solving these problems, statistical data, political documents and practical examples; 2) employers and representatives of professional associations participate in defence of both bachelor's and master's theses; 3) surveys among employers, students and graduates are conducted; 4) representatives from Public Health Association of Latvia and employers participate in the meetings of the Quality Board of the Public Health programmes.

Lecturers of the Department of Public Health and Epidemiology take an active part in work of different Latvian and international committees and boards dealing with professional issues, as well as carry out other duties not directly related to their academic activity. Assistant Professor Anda Ķīvīte is the national expert on drug-related infections, *European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)*, *Reitox* national focal point in Latvia; Associate Professor Dzintars Mozgis is a member of the National Council for Prevention of Alcoholism, as well as a Member of Management Board of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction; Alternate Member of Management Board of the European Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention Drugs and Drug Addiction; since February 2012 Ieva Strēle has been a private expert in task force Morbidity Statistics with the European Commission, Eurostat; Anita Villeruša is a Member of the Monitoring Board of National Healthy Municipalities; Ģirts

Brīģis is a Member of the Strategic Council of the Ministry of Health.

To promote cooperation with employers' organisations, their involvement in the education of prospective professionals, as well as to increase the RSU students' competitiveness in the labour market, each year the university hosts a Career Week. It includes presentations of employer organisations, where representatives of employers tell about career opportunities in the organisation they represent, offer RSU students and graduates current vacancies, as well as provide practical advice on how to succeed in the labour market. More than 30 employers participated in the Career Week from 27 to 29 October 2015. RSU students and graduates had an opportunity to meet the representatives from medical and healthcare institutions from Riga (such as Pauls Stradins Clinical University Hospital, Children's Clinical University Hospital, Riga East Clinical University Hospital, Health Centre Association, Health Centre 4, MFD medical company, the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control) and regional healthcare institutions (such as Ziemeļkurzeme Regional Hospital, Daugavpils Regional Hospital, Madona Hospital, Rēzekne Hospital, Tukums Hospital, National Rehabilitation Centre "Vaivari"). The event was attended by more than 250 healthcare students.

In order to promote cooperation among practising public health sphere professionals, postgraduate students are involved in the Public Health Association of Latvia.

### **9.2. Quantitative indicators of international exchange of students and academic staff.**

Please see paragraph 8.3 of the description of the study direction.

Students may apply for Erasmus exchange programme; however, none of the postgraduate students of the academic year 2015/2016 used this option. Meanwhile, Paul Pavitra, a visiting assistant professor from the University of Eastern Finland taught the study course in Health Economics as a part of ERASMUS exchange programme.

### **9.3. Cooperation with local and foreign institutions of higher education and colleges that implement similar study programmes by indicating whether the institution cooperates with libraries of other institutions of higher education or colleges.**

There are no similar study programmes in public health in Latvia. It differs from other healthcare programmes implemented at RSU by its content which is targeted at health, health preservation, promotion, assessment of various health risk factors and prevention.

Faculty of Public Health and Social Welfare with its Public Health programmes is a member of the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER). Participation in this international organisation allows harmonising the study content with similar programmes in the European Region and ensures an extensive cooperation with similar study programmes. At the moment the Faculty of Public Health and Social Welfare has concluded cooperation agreements on exchange of students and lecturers within Erasmus programme in the area of public health with the following institutions: University of Klaipeda (Lithuania), University of Eastern Finland (Finland), University of Debrecen (Hungary) and University of Hamburg (Germany).

### **9.4. International certificates, accreditations etc. of the study programme or the institution.**

Rīga Stradiņš University has been certified in conformity with international standard ISO 9001:2008 "Quality management

system, Requirements” since 2002. Fields: higher education, lifelong learning, research, assessment of research results, assessment of knowledge and skills, issue of documents certifying the acquisition of the degree of education, higher professional education, academic degree, scientific degree.

At the end of 2014, re-certification took place that testifies to the fact that Rīga Stradiņš University keeps continuously developing and fitting in unified European Higher Education Area by improving the quality of education and raising the prestige of the university so that RSU’s academic staff and students would be eager to work and study at Rīga Stradiņš University.

Document certifying the conformity to the requirements of ISO 9001:2008 is available on RSU website: [http://www.rsu.lv/images/stories/dokumenti/sertifikati/ISO\\_LV\\_2014.pdf](http://www.rsu.lv/images/stories/dokumenti/sertifikati/ISO_LV_2014.pdf).

In February 2016, PASCL experts paid a visit to RSU, within the frame whereof RSU is recognised as a student-centred university (see Paragraph 9.2. of the Description of the Study Direction).

#### **10. Conformity of the study programme to the needs of the labour market, employer survey results.**

In March 2016 the Public Health Association of Latvia explored the labour market situation regarding graduate employment. Out of the total number of 240 graduates, we succeeded to obtain e-mail addresses of 186, and 132 of them, the former Public Health study programme graduates, completed the survey.

Only 10% of the respondents replied that they do not work in the public health sector.

68% indicated that they were real public health specialists, while 21.4% are employed in areas partially related to public health such as clinical research, pharmaceutical companies, supply of medical equipment, health insurance, sports and fitness, health profile educational institutions, etc. Both state and municipal institutions and private enterprises were listed among employers. The most popular public health areas of employment were health promotion, healthcare management, policy and health economics; public health research; health statistics; protection of working environment and safety at work; environmental health, food safety monitoring; control of infectious diseases. The best of the best among the graduates have followed career path in the academic environment, which is typical of new fields.

##### *Employer survey results.*

At the end of the spring semester of 2015/2016, a discussion was held on options and prospective employment opportunities for public health specialists, both having a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree, in Latvia. The discussion took place after the professional bachelor's study programme students had defended their placement and passed state examinations. Among participants were representatives from both state institutions, non-governmental organisations providing for placement options for students of bachelor's study programme and employment opportunities for the graduates of Public Health Faculty. Main findings of this discussion: 1) the graduates are well prepared, both theoretically and practically, for work in public health practice and science; 2) the graduates are highly motivated to work; 3) public health specialist operational options are extensive, however, the resources of public health specialists are not fully used due to the uncertain labour market situation. The complete presentation on employment can be found in the homepage of Public Health Association of Latvia [www.lsva.lv](http://www.lsva.lv)

In the summer of 2016, a questionnaire was sent out to the employers in order to find out their view on inclusion of graduates in the labour market (find the questionnaire attached). Employers from Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Inspection, Ministry of Health, and Food and Veterinary Service participated in the employer's survey.

**11. Prospective evaluation of study programmes taking into account priorities specified in development planning documents at national level, Latvia's tasks in implementing the strategy of the European Union, as well as conformity of the study programme to the recommendations for the development of the European Higher Education Area.**

In 1997 the Faculty of Public Health was created at the Latvian Academy of Medicine (now RSU) with the aim to create education programme in public health area complying with the Western standards. The necessity for such a faculty and study direction was determined by the stable development of public health sector and its prospects in the European countries where health indicators of the population have been improved as a result of public health sector activity.

Within this faculty, the first professional bachelor's study programme was created and in 2000 also a master's programme. The priority of Public Health study programme is health and its promotion on the level of the entire population. This approach is highlighted as the leading one in disease prevention and health promotion sectors in Latvia, also in the future, and it is widely described in Public Health Guidelines 2014-2020 issued by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia and approved on 30 September 2014. Based on this strategic document, the Ministry of Health has started work on strengthening the role of municipalities in health promotion with increasing the capacity of human resources as one of the topical issues. From this aspect, a public health study programme provides good support for implementation of policy in long-term both on national and European Union level.

Academic Master's study programme Public Health is developed in compliance with CR No. 240 Regulations on State Academic Education Standard and it provides for: 1) gaining and developing in-depth theoretical knowledge and research skills in the public health science; 2) preparing the students for independent research work in the public health science.

Continuity of study levels is ensured. Public health education at RSU provides for programme continuity in compliance with the Bologna process, i.e., graduates of bachelor's study programme may continue studies on master's and subsequently doctoral level.

The planned outcomes of the study programme have been defined in the form of knowledge, skills and competencies, based on Latvian Qualification Framework level descriptors (6th level) which comply with the European Qualification Framework level descriptors.

Recommendations on public health education<sup>7</sup> issued by the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER<sup>8</sup>) have been taken into account during development of the content of the study programme, its organisation, implementation and definition of learning outcomes, since RSU Faculty of Public Health is a full member of ASPHER. ASPHER was founded in 1966, and at the moment more than 70 institutional members representing different EU Member States are operating

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<sup>7</sup> The Association of schools of public health in the European region (ASPHER) <http://www.aspher.org/>

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Birt, Anders Foldspang (2011) ASPHER'S European public health core competences programme: philosophy, process and vision

in it. ASPHER is the leading European organisation aimed at strengthening the public health education, harmonisation of study programmes in the joint European area, link educational competences and practice, as well as promote research. ASPHER develops the main public health competences (European Public Health Core Competences). The aim of these competences is: to promote a better and more unified understanding of public health, as well as work and functions of a public health specialist; to facilitate a dialogue between the teaching staff and employers; to improve the quality of study programmes, increase their conformity with labour market needs; to follow the latest trends in public health needs and introduce them in the study programmes in a timely manner. Participation in ASPHER ensures exchange of information on a regular basis and permanent cooperation among EU Member State public health schools. ASPHER organises annual conferences where members of the organisation as well as leading specialists discuss the most important novelties in the public health education.

Head of the study programme: \_\_\_\_\_/Anita Villeruša/  
*Signature, full name*

Date: 26.09.2016.

AGREED ON

In Rīga Stradiņš University \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting of \_\_\_\_ 2016

Minutes No. \_\_\_\_\_