RĪGAS STRADIŅA UNIVERSITĀTE

Approved by Rīga Stradiņš University
Senate Executive Committee Decision as of 28.10.2016;
minutes 1-3/28.10.16

Updated by the decision of Rīga Stradiņš University
Senate Bureau of 21.05.2019, minutes 3-1 / 9/2019

RĪGA STRADIŅŠ UNIVERSITY

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2017 - 2021

CONSOLIDATED VERSION

RIGA
2016

CONTENT

DESIGNATIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED

ABBREVIATION	EXPLANATION
8.1.1. Specific Purpose Support	8.1.1. specific purpose of support "To increase the number of the modernised STEM study programmes, including medicine and creative industries"
BITF	Boris and Ināra Teterev Foundation
BKUS	Children's Clinical University Hospital;
BMC	LATVIAN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH AND STUDY CENTRE
PM system	Performance Management System
DU	Daugavpils University
EEA	European Economic Area
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EM	Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Latvia
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
ESF	European Social Fund
EUR	*euro*
GZF laboratory	Finished Dosage Form Laboratory
IT	Information Technology
IZM	Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia
CF	Cohesion Fund
LAKIFA	Association of Latvian Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industry
LIDA	Latvian Investment and Development Agency
LLU	Latvia University of Agriculture
LR	Republic of Latvia
LCCI	Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LU	University of Latvia
LV	Latvia
METC	Medical Education Technology Centre
MK	Cabinet of Ministers
NDP	National Development Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OSCE	Objective structured clinical examination
OSI	Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis
PASCL	Peer Assessment of Student Centred Learning
PIC	Centre for Educational Growth
FTE	Full-time equivalent
PSCUH	Pauls Stradiņš Clinical University Hospital
RECUH	Riga East Clinical University Hospital
RIS3	Smart Specialisation Strategy of Latvia;

ABBREVIATION	EXPLANATION
RSU, University	Rīga Stradiņš University
RSU AP	Rīga Stradiņš University, Development Administration
RSU ISD	Rīga Stradiņš University, International Student Department
RSU DN	Rīga Stradiņš University, Department of Doctoral Studies
RSU ESF	Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of European Studies
RSU FD	Rīga Stradiņš University, Finance Department
RSU FF	Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Pharmacy
RSU ITD	Rīga Stradiņš University, Information Technology Department
RSU JF	Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Law
RSU KF	Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Communication
RSU MD	Rīga Stradiņš University, Study Department
RSU MF	Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Medicine
RSU PD	Rīga Stradiņš University, Human Resources Department
RSU RF	Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Rehabilitation
RSU RCMC	Red Cross Medical College of Rīga Stradiņš University
RSU SS	Rīga Stradiņš University, Student Services
RSU SSD	Rīga Stradiņš University, Department of International Affairs
RSU SVSLF	Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Public Health and Social Welfare
RSU TIF	Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Continuing Education
RSU ZF	Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Dentistry
RTU	Riga Technical University
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, including Medicine and Creative Industries (Republic of Latvia Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 561) STEM study programme directions implemented by RSU: health care and life sciences
SVKM VNPC	National Research Centre of Public Health and Clinical Medicine
TTO	Technology Transfer Office
MEPRD	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia
VID	State Revenue Service
VM	Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia
SSM	State Secretaries Meeting

SOURCES USED

Laws and regulations and planning documents
Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvia 2030).
National Reform Programme of Latvia for Implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
Kurzeme Planning Region Sustainable Development Strategy for the Period 2015-2030.
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National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2020 (NDP2020)
Operational Programme “Growth and Employment”.
Smart Specialisation Strategy of Latvia.
The National Concept for the Development of Higher Education and Institutions of Higher Education in Latvia for 2013 -2020.
Public Health Policy Guidelines for 2014-2020.
Regional Policy Guidelines for 2013-2019.
Operational strategy of RSU Scientific Institution for 2015-2020.
RSU Development Concept for 2013-2017.
The European Commission Strategy “Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”.
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Latvia Competitiveness Report: Pharmaceutical sector. 2015 (Author: Think-tank CERTUS).
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The Ministry of Education and Science Review of Higher Education in Latvia in 2015.
PASCL Report on Implementation of a Student-centred Approach in RSU. February 2016.
The Ministry of Economy Informative Report on Medium and Long-term Labour Market Forecasts. June 2016.
Higher Education Council Review of the results of evaluation of higher education study programmes and proposals for further study programme, grouped in study directions, upgrading, improvement, development, consolidation, closure, efficient use of resources and financing from the national budget funds. 2013.

Analytical Description of the Ecosystem of the Smart Specialisation Area - “Biomedicine, Medical Technologies, Biopharmacy and Biotechnologies” November 2015 (Author: “FIDEA” Ltd).
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INTRODUCTION

Rīga Stradiņš University is one of the leading and most advanced institutions of higher education in the Baltic countries with the vision of becoming a modern, prestigious, European and world-renowned university, in which the main value is the person and which provides research-based, high-quality and exportable higher education.

Rīga Stradiņš University (hereinafter - RSU, the University) Development Strategy for 2017 - 2021 (hereinafter - the Strategy) is a medium-term planning document, which in accordance with vision, mission and values defined for the University long-term development, determines RSU priorities, main developmental and horizontal goals and objectives that are to be reached for achieving the each goal set and the main indicators.

In the process of developing the Strategy, the University activities are assessed under the six thematic plans, which being the main transversal factors are essential prerequisites for the development of the University:

1. Development Plan for Study Programmes
2. Human Resources Development Plan
3. Development Plan for Internationalisation
4. Cooperation Development Plan
5. Management Development Plan
6. Resource Development Plan

Implementation of RSU Strategy is confirmed by RSU Senate's decision.

1. REVIEW OF EXISTING SITUATION

Rīga Stradiņš University (hereinafter - RSU, the University) is a state-founded institution of higher education and science under the supervision of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia, which has been closely integrated into the national healthcare system already since 1950.

RSU agency "Red Cross Medical College of Rīga Stradiņš University" (hereinafter - RSU RCMC) is subordinate to RSU. RSU Liepāja Branch (the former Liepāja Medical College) was established in 2010. RSU Liepāja Branch is the only healthcare institution in the western region of Latvia, offering professional Bachelor's and first level professional higher education in healthcare field (5 programmes in total) compliant with European standards.

The University has been implementing a modern quality improvement approach in its activities to ensure high quality of studies and research aimed at continuous improvement and development of RSU towards excellence. Since 2002 RSU has been certified in accordance with the international quality management standard ISO 9001:2008 (re-certification was carried out in 2014) Certified areas: higher education, lifelong learning, research, and assessment of research results, knowledge and skills, as well as the issue of documents attesting completion of education, higher professional education and award of academic and scientific degrees.

Rīga Stradiņš University is one of the highest rated institutions of higher education in Latvia. Assessing the international competitiveness and achievements of institutions of higher education, the role of international ratings is increasing, as they often serve for attracting students and funding.

RSU success in international ratings is the following:

- QS TOP Universities 2016 (rank 110-120 in the EECA Region);
- U-Multirank launched by the European Commission [1] 2016 (most of the highest ratings (A) among universities in Latvia[2]);
- Webometrics[3] 2016 (rank 3 in Latvia; rank 384 in the European Union).

The awards received during the last three years also attest to RSU competitiveness:

- In 2014 RSU received Krišjānis Valdemārs Award "Latvji, brauciet jūriņā!" *(Latvians, Sail the Sea!)*, which is the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Export Excellence Award that is given to the best national exporters (export of higher education).
- In 2015 RSU was among the best-selling brands TOP-25, created by the export support movement The Red Jackets.
- In 2015 RSU won the title of Export Champion in the competition "Export and Innovation Award" held by the Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIDA) and the Ministry of Economy.

[1] More than 1300 institutions of higher education from 90 countries worldwide are included in U-Multirank rating. The Universities are not ranked in the order of points but the performance of the institution of higher education according to different indicators is displayed. U-Multirank has a multidimensional approach with more than 30 criteria, according to which institutions of higher education are ranked on a scale from A (the highest rating) to E (the lowest). Dimensions: international orientation, regional engagement, teaching and learning, knowledge transfer and research.

[2] The number of ratings (A) for the institutions of higher education of Latvia: RSU - 6; Daugavpils University - 5; Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music - 5; Rīga Technical University - 4; University of Latvia - 4; Latvia University of Agriculture - 4; BA School of Business and Finance - 4; Liepaja University - 4.

[3] It is one of the most comprehensive ratings of institutions of higher education based on the information available on the Internet about the respective university (homepage, publications, research, etc.).

RSU profile in the higher education area

In the academic year 2016/2017 RSU offers 65 study programmes (including 32 STEM[4] study programmes in health care and life science study directions) in 9 different study directions (Figure 1), including 11 study programmes which are offered in English.

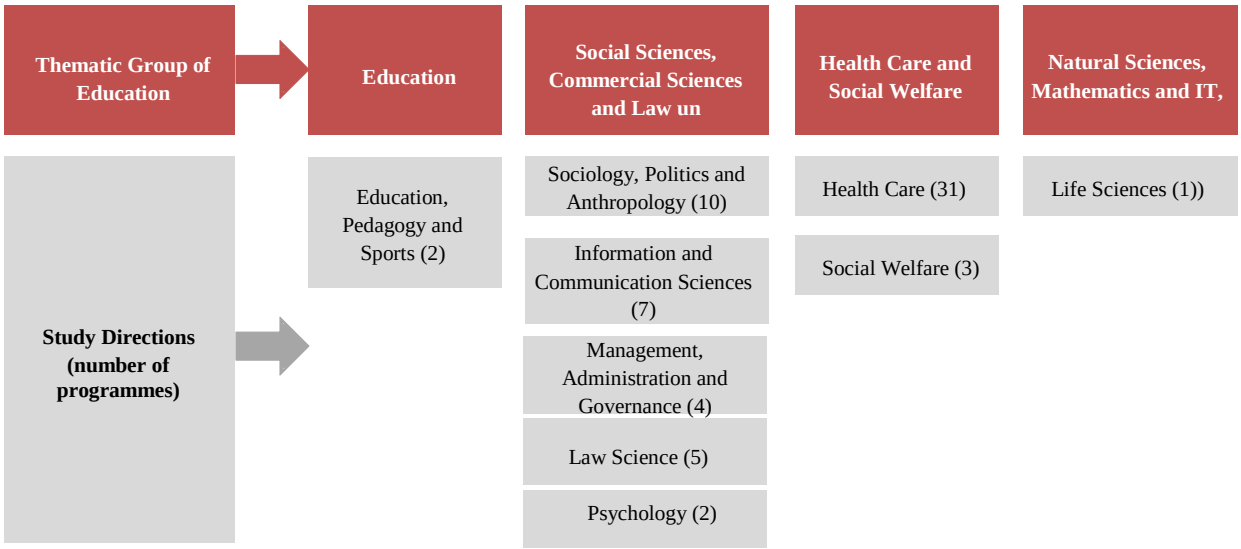

Figure 1. RSU study directions and programmes in the academic year 2016/2017.

RSU provides three-cycle education by implementing Bachelor's study programmes, Master's study programmes, higher professional education study programmes, doctoral study programmes and continuing education study programmes.

9 RSU faculties (Faculty of European Studies, Faculty of Pharmacy, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Communication, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Rehabilitation, Faculty of Public Health and Social Welfare, Faculty of Dentistry and Faculty of Continuing Education), as well as the Department of Doctoral Studies, International Student Department and RSU Liepāja Branch are primarily involved in planning, organisation and direct implementation of the educational process.

[4] STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, including Medicine and Creative Industries (Republic of Latvia Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 561).

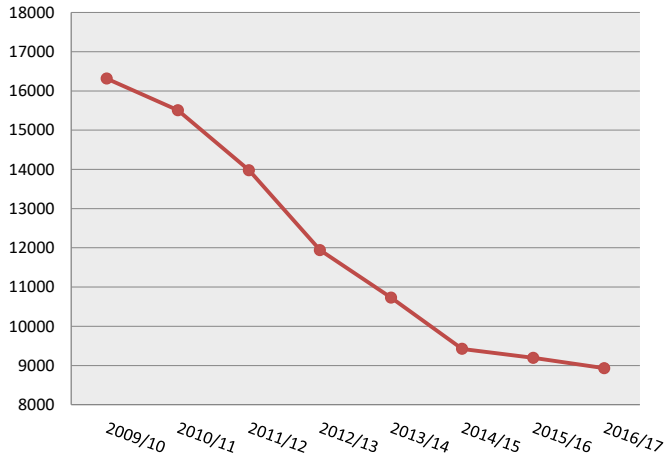

Figure 2. Dynamics of the number of pupils in class 12 (day training programmes).

The source: Ministry of Education and Science

The number of students at RSU has increased despite the adverse demographic situation in Latvia as a whole, when the number of pupils has sharply decreased in the last 7-8 years (Figure 2). RSU has increased the number of students mainly thanks to the increase in the number of foreign students (Figure 3). During the last 7 academic years, the total number of RSU students has increased by 32% (8,149 students by 20.10.2016), the number of foreign students has increased more than 6 times, while the number of local students has been fluctuating (the average number has remained at ~ 6 thousand).

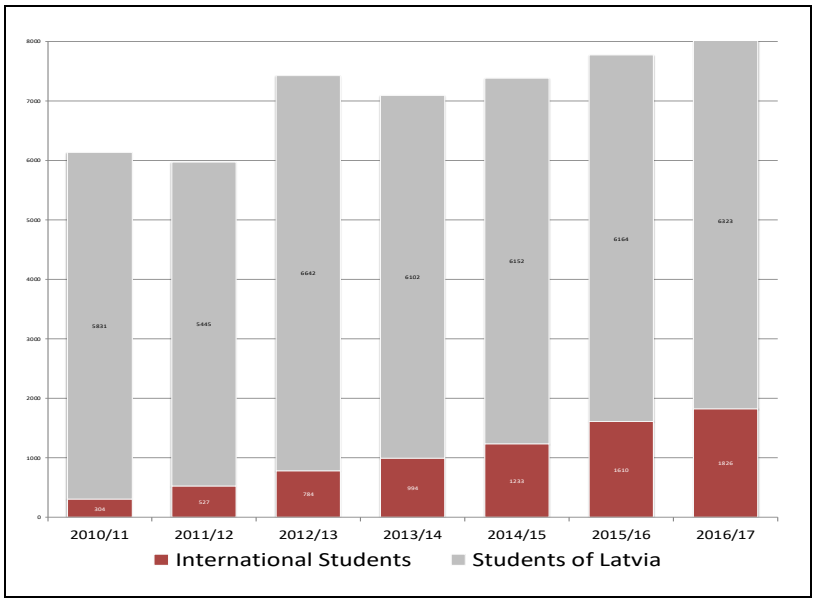

Figure 3. RSU total number of students: international students and students of Latvia[5].

Compared to other institutions of higher education in Latvia, RSU is a leader in attracting foreign students. According to the data of 2015 given in the overview by the Ministry of Education and Science on higher education in Latvia, the

[5] Data for the academic year 2016/17 are indicated as they were on 20 October 2016, the rest of the data - as they were on 1st October in accordance with the reports submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science.

total number of foreign students[6], who studied to obtain a degree or qualification in all the institutions of higher education in Latvia in the academic year 2015/2016 reached 5183 people, of which 1557 students or 30% of the total number of foreign students in Latvia chose RSU as the basic study place.

Currently 1826 foreign students[7] from 53 countries of the world study at RSU: the majority of foreign students are from Germany and Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway and Finland) - 42% and 35% respectively, while the proportion of students from other countries is less than 5%.

The proportion of foreign students in the total number of RSU students has increased from 5.2 % in the academic year 2010/2011 to 22.4% in the academic year 2016/2017. The foreign students studying in exchange programmes make up only 3% of the total number of foreign students - most foreign students (97%) study to obtain a degree or qualification, and only in the study programmes in healthcare direction.

The quality of studies is closely linked to the qualification and research of the academic staff. The rapid increase in the number of RSU students has also increased the capacity of the academic staff of the University; the number of the academic staff has increased by 18% over the last five years. The number of people elected to the academic positions having a doctoral degree is 75%, which is a very high indicator in the sector. In general RSU academic staff has a high research and professional qualification: a significant proportion of lecturers are also recognised professionals and practitioners in their field (the proportion of practising lecturers ranges from 10% to 65% depending on the study programme). In 2014 the Centre for Educational Growth was set up to support the improvement of the in-service training for the teaching staff.

RSU profile in the field of science

RSU has been known for its considerable research potential both in Latvia and in the world. RSU researchers conduct not only fundamental and applied research, but also actively co-operate with business people in Latvia and Europe, as well as with other research institutions, providing research services and expertise. On average 25 doctoral theses per year were defended at the University from 2010 to 2015.

Scientific activity at the University is concentrated in 12 scientific departments: 4 institutes and 8 laboratories (Figure 4)

[6] 17 state founded institutions of higher education and 16 institutions founded by legal entities.

[7] Including the students in exchange programmes.

INSTITUTES	LABORATORIES	
A.Kirhenšteins Institute of Microbiology and Virology	Andrology Laboratory	Laboratory of Biochemistry
Institute for Occupational safety and Health	Laboratory of Biomechanics	Laboratory of Hygiene and Occupational Diseases
Institute of the History of Medicine	Joint Laboratory of Clinical Immunology and Immunogenetics	Scientific Laboratory of Molecular Genetics
Institute of Oncology	Laboratory of Transplantology	Joint Laboratory of Traumatology and Orthopedics

Figure 4. RSU research departments.

In 2008 with the involvement of ERDF co-financing, the Technology Transfer Office (hereinafter TTO) was set up at RSU with the aim of developing and maintaining external relations with the private sector, providing information on RSU research activities and experience. The TTO promotes RSU research capacity, deals with intellectual property protection and management, as well as organizes cooperation with the private sector (study of orders, commercialized offers to companies, contact bourses, exhibitions, etc.).

RSU takes an active part in the transfer of knowledge and technologies: pharmaceutical products such as "Fitesten" and "Glycomune", based on intellectual property and knowledge of RSU scientists, have come onto the market over the last 5 years. At present, there are 3 new technology transfer projects or commercial projects in search of licensing partners in the areas such as molecular biology (a genetic test for infertility reasons), dermatology (derma-cosmetic remedy for renewal of the skin barrier function) and veterinary medicine (a remedy for the treatment of sub-clinical mastitis in cows).

In the period from 2010 to 2016 RSU scientists registered more than 70 patents, including 4 international patents. During the last 2 years, 27 new patent applications were submitted, including 5 international or PCT patent applications (on average 12 new patent applications a year).

The number of publications by the academic and research staff of institutions of higher education in citation databases is one of the indicators of its quality and recognition, and it is the determining criterion for evaluating and comparing the results and productivity of research work. The presence of publications in citation databases indicates their research quality and citation of the publication indicates its scientific significance and the author's contribution to the development of research in the sector. According to the information of the global scientific information and citation database SCOPUS, in the period from 2000 to 2014 RSU had 411 publications, 34 of which rank among Top 10 most cited publications in the sector, thus RSU is the sixth largest provider of scientific publications in Latvia.

RSU has also gained considerable experience by joining the largest EU research and innovation programme HORIZON 2020: RSU has a leading role (a coordinator) in two research projects; and in other six projects RSU participates as a project partner (Table 1). Whereas during the previous planning period RSU as a coordinator implemented the project "Unlocking Infectious Diseases Research Potential at Rīga Stradiņš University" within the Seventh Framework Project.

The Role of RSU in the Project	Project Title (in English)	Project Implementation Period
RSU - a Project Coordinator	VACTRAIN "Twinning on DNA-based Cancer Vaccines".	01.01.2016 - 31.12.2016
	COST Action No 15111 "EUROMENE European Network on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome"	21.04.2016 - 20.04.2020
RSU - a Project Partner	Re-InVEST "Rebuilding an Inclusive Value-Based Europe of Solidarity and Trust through Social Investment"	01.03.2015 - 28.02.2019
	PERFORM " Personalised Risk Assessment in Febrile Illness to Optimise Real-Life Management across the European Union"	01.01.2016 - 31.12.2020
	INFORM "Closing the Gap between Formal and Informal Institutions in the Balkans"	01.04.2016 31.03.2019
	HBM4EU "European Human Biomonitoring Initiative"	01.01.2017 - 31.12.2021
	TO-REACH "Transfer of Organisational Innovations for Resilient, Effective, Equitable, Accessible, Sustainable and Comprehensive Health Services and Systems"	01.01.2017 - 31.12.2019
	ERA- NET TRANSCAN-2 "Mutated Neo-Antigens in Hepatocellular Carcinoma" (HEPAMUT)	01.03.2017 - 28.02.2020
	Baltic Biomaterials Centre of Excellence (BBCE)	01.01.2020.- 31.12.2026.

Table 1 HORIZON 2020 projects to be implemented by RSU

It should be mentioned that the project VACTRAIN is the only Twinning project of research institutions in the field of smart specialisation direction "Biomedicine, Medical Technology, Biopharmacy and Biotechnology"

Financial indicators

The activities of the University are characterised by high financial stability and efficiency: a continuous increase in revenue has been ensured; at the same time costs have been balanced and optimized.

Between 2010 and 2015 RSU ensured stable revenue growth of about 6% a year. In 2015 total income of RSU increased by 32% or by 10.9 million EUR compared to 2010, reaching 44.8 million EUR (Figure 5).

In the structure of RSU income, the proportion of services for tuition fee continues to grow, reaching 37% in 2015, when the revenues from the paid educational services for the first time exceeded the public subsidy for higher education. The number of students who pay for their tuition is an essential indicator of the quality and growth of RSU education; its increase is the main reason for the increase in total revenues.

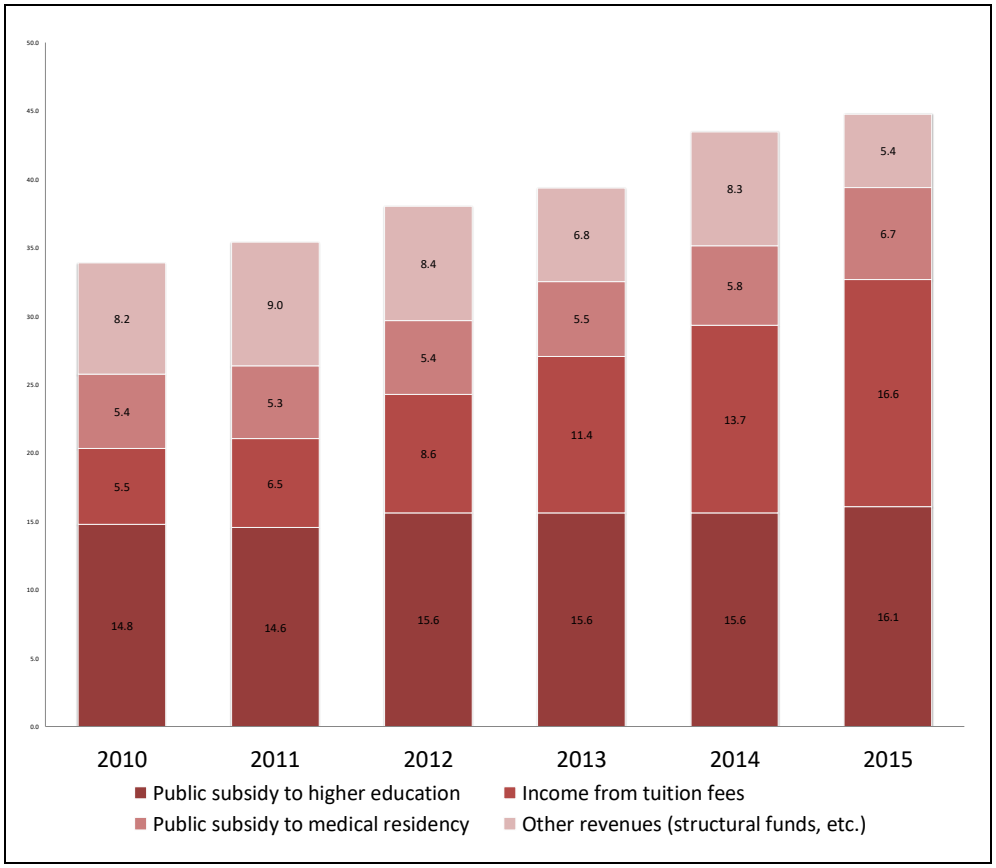

Figure 5. RSU income structure between 2011 and 2015 in million EUR

In 2015 staff costs (52%), services, including building maintenance costs (25%) and long-term investment in fixed assets (11%) made the largest proportion of the University expenditure. In general RSU expenditure structure is rather stable: the total increase or decrease in expenditure over the past 5 years has mainly depended on fluctuations in the amount of long-term investment, while the changes in other expenditure headings are largely correlated with changes in operating revenue.

In the period from 2012 to 2016 RSU invested almost 26.5 million EUR in modernisation of education and research infrastructure (renovation and reconstruction of buildings and premises, purchase of study and research equipment, acquisition of computer technology and office equipment and furniture), in development of IT systems and increasing of library resources. Both RSU own funds (55%) and funds of the EU structural funds (ERDF, CF and others) (45%) were used for financing investment.

The most significant investments made by RSU during the last 5 years were the following:

- The most advanced Medical Education Technology Centre in the Baltic countries was created (in 2013);
- The Nuclear Medicine Centre was completed (2015-2016);
- Reconstruction of RSU central building (buildings B and C) and improvement of the surrounding area was completed (2015-2016);
- Partial reconstruction of the Anatomical Theatre and its equipping with new study equipment was carried out (in 2015);
- New (additional) training rooms were created in Riga East Clinical University Hospital, at 30 Kristapa iela (Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy), at 20/20A Dzirciema iela (Faculty of Dentistry), and others. (2015-2016).

STRATEGIC GUIDELINES

VISION:

RSU is a modern, prestigious, European and world-renowned university, the main value of which is a person and which provides research-based, high -quality and exportable higher education.

MISSION:

To prepare high-quality professionals in the field of health care and social sciences for the European and global community so that the knowledge, skills, competence and attitude acquired during studies are in line with the high requirements of the European Union and humanitarian traditions as well as create a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

MAIN GOAL AND PRIORITIES:

The main goal of RSU is to provide education based on academic and innovative knowledge, skills and competence, which puts forward the two key priorities throughout the University activities:

Development of studies

Development of science and research

MAIN DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR 2017 - 2021

MAIN DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR 2017 -2021 / HORIZONTAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR 2017 -2021		
	1	2
	Innovative studies in a modern environment	**Research in health, life and human sciences**
	The value of RSU study programmes is their interdisciplinary character, acquisition of academic and innovative knowledge, professional and life skills, experience of their application using the latest generation technologies in a unified and modern study and research environment.	The basis of RSU research activity is focusing resources on conducting outstanding theoretical and applicable research corresponding to the epoch and topical needs and problems of the society, which is aimed at improving the quality of life and well-being of people, technology transfer and the targeted commercialisation of the newly-acquired knowledge.
3	**Social responsibility for sustainable development of the University and the community**	RSU being a socially responsible employer takes care of the needs of the environment, continuing education, social equity and well-being by using sustainable solutions in its day-to-day work, providing the public with access to the academic competence, knowledge and skills.
4	**Key cooperation for integration into the labour market**	RSU, in cooperation with employers - clinics, research centres, government and local government institutions, leading companies of the sector both in Latvia and abroad, ensures continuous professional development and career development for students, staff and researchers, as well as acquisition of knowledge, skills and competence appropriate to the needs of the sector and specialisation of human resources in research.
5	**Internationalisation and reputation for international recognition**	RSU, proactively responding to the challenges of today's globalised higher education area, has been developing high-quality international dimensions in all the directions of its activities and has been creating the community of RSU messengers that promote the international competitiveness, recognition and reputation of the University.

THEMATIC AREAS IN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH:

- Health Care
- Social Welfare
- Life Sciences
- Teacher Education and Education Sciences
- Social and Human Sciences
- Information and Communication Sciences
- Business Science and Administration
- Legal Science

KEY CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:			
Human Resources	Administration and Finances	Infrastructure	Material and Technical Base
VALUES:			
HUMAN BEING	**TEAM**	**RESULT**	**LOYALTY**

2. SWOT ANALYSIS

2.1. STRENGTHS

- The most important medical university in Latvia, which is closely integrated into the national healthcare system, having a high regional visibility and ambitions to become one of the most significant medical education centres in Europe.
- RSU has a high reputation both in the society of Latvia (also among school-leavers) and internationally. The name of RSU is associated with high-quality education in the fields of medicine and social sciences.
- RSU academic and research staff have high-level research and professional qualification; the teaching staff are often recognised professionals and practitioners in their field, whereas researchers are well-known and recognised experts in the sector. RSU attracts foreign guest lecturers and visiting lecturers in order to improve the content of the study programmes and to introduce innovative methods in study processes. The University implements a comprehensive set of events supporting the development of professional qualifications of the staff.
- The basic feature of the study directions implemented in RSU is creation and development of study programmes included therein which are based on the needs of the economy and the requirements of the labour market, by closely linking studies and practice that enable graduates to better integrate into the work environment. In order to provide students with placements, RSU actively cooperates with employers: clinics in Latvia and abroad, government and local government institutions, pharmacies and pharmaceutical companies, as well as with other business people.
- A significant and rapidly growing number of international students that helps to compensate the consequences of the disadvantaged demographic situation. By providing an offer of export-oriented education, RSU is an absolute leader in attracting international students in Latvia and other Baltic countries.
- A growing number of students is an essential indicator of the education quality and growth of RSU; revenues from paid education services have already exceeded the state subsidies for higher education.
- By implementing a sound financial policy, focused on cost optimization and diversification of sources, as well as introducing efficient financial planning and control mechanisms, the University has achieved high financial performance and has made significant investments in improving its infrastructure.
- An integrated environment suitable for studies and research: well-equipped lecture theatres (renovated buildings, modern multimedia equipment), opportunities for clinical simulations offered by the METC, access to high-quality research infrastructure, IT infrastructure and e-learning environment, a modern library with access to electronic information resources, etc.
- RSU is known for its strong research potential both in Latvia and in the world; it also offers diverse opportunities for students to engage in research. RSU researchers take an active part in the field of knowledge and technology transfer, developing cooperation with business people both in Latvia and the European Union, as well as with other research institutions; they participate in local and international research and innovation projects, as well as engage in pedagogical activities.
- RSU has established long-lasting and successful cooperation with Latvian and international institutions of higher education and research institutions (inter-university study programmes, joint research projects, exchange of experience, ERASMUS + cooperation agreements , etc.), with employers (placement, including in German clinics, planning and implementation of educational programmes), with local governments and municipalities of Latvia, with professional organisations, RSU graduates and other external partners.
- The University implements a modern quality assurance approach to ensure high quality studies and research: since 2002 RSU has been certified according to the international quality management system standard ISO 9001:2008.

- RSU has a broad and highly-appreciated offer in the fields of continuing education and lifelong learning (professional development programmes, Open University).

2.2. WEAKNESSES

- The University as a whole is institutionally fragmented, and it has complicated organisation, which creates additional risks for effective decision-making and sufficiently efficient flow of processes and optimal administrative workload.
- A fragmented organisational culture, where the rather autonomous development of various departments plays an important role, which tends to lead to disorganisation and stagnation.
- The amount of information available in RSU information systems is very large, so it is not always easy to manage. There are no unified requirements in separate processes, and document management is not efficient enough (not all the document processing workflows are automated).
- The main challenges of RSU in the field of human resources:
    - Pay disparities between the academic staff of healthcare and social sciences sectors, as well as between the academic and research staff create unnecessary internal tension and competition among RSU staff.
    - Limited competition for the advertised academic and research staff positions.
    - Limited resources of lecturers with specific knowledge (for example, in industrial pharmacy), and lack of lecturers with good knowledge of English.
- RSU focuses only on the development of "self-educated" academic staff, minimally attracting staff with the experience of other academic institutions.
- The burden on healthcare professionals/experts, who work also in their own sphere, makes them work at RSU on a part-time basis thus reducing their ability to devote time for communication with students outside lectures.
- There are no long-term cooperation agreements with clinics for healthcare study direction (contracts on training are concluded for a year). Insufficient amount of study rooms in clinics (not relevant to the number of students in groups).
- Main restrictions of RSU infrastructure:
    - Geographical dispersal of RSU major study infrastructure.
    - Lack of the University hospital (clinical base unit).
    - Lack of research infrastructure for the development of pharmaceutical industry.
    - Part of RSU training laboratories and lecture theatres are already fully occupied. Training laboratories that provide the programmes implemented by the Faculty of Pharmacy do not meet the current requirements in terms of capacity and quality that affect the organisation of the study process.
    - Lack of modern halls of residence and student accommodation (including the offer of a full range services for international students).
- Lack of state funding for the social sciences study direction.
- Insufficient international cooperation in the social sciences study direction, both in the field of student and teaching staff exchange, and in the area of project implementation.

- Fragmentation of individual study programmes and the small number of students increase the cost for the implementation of the programme, as a result of which the study fees of the programme should be set higher than in other institutions of higher education making the fee uncompetitive.

- Insufficient integration of foreign and local students (lack of bilingual approach, lack of mutual integration between the international student and local student groups).

- Unbalanced University internationalisation policy (focusing on attracting foreign students, inadequate contact with RSU foreign graduates, delayed involvement in professional certification issues, obtaining qualification and other aspects in dentistry that affect RSU international reputation).

- Several RSU programmes that are offered in English, are not competitive internationally, which is explained by the following factors: the high study fees, availability of similar study programmes abroad, that are free of charge, low prestige of the professions offered by the programme in their home countries, insufficient funding for the marketing of the study programmes, lack of support mechanisms for extending the appeal of the study programmes, non-involvement of faculties in improving and upgrading the programmes.

- Insufficient proportion of research work in RSU as a whole and in the study process. There is lack of cooperation between research and study departments and scanty involvement of research staff in the study process.

2.3. OPPORTUNITIES

- Cooperation with public administration bodies and the development of the common health sector, promoting the compliance of training with the needs of the society and new partnerships in academic work.
- Development of cooperation with leading foreign and Latvian universities and research centres, facilitating the mobility of trainees and academic and research staff, creating joint high-level education programmes and research projects, in particular, in cross-sectional dimension. Development of cooperation is prospective not only within the European context but also on a wider scale, including in emerging markets, for the growth of which global organisations allocate significant financial resources.
- Greater involvement of teaching staff and students in ERASMUS international exchange programmes, as well as attraction of foreign guest lecturers and visiting researchers.
- Strengthening and diversifying cooperation with clinics in Latvia and abroad.
- Extension of cooperation with professional organisations and employers expanding the placement opportunities for RSU students as well as opportunities for in-service training for RSU academic staff.
- Development of cooperation with entrepreneurs, promotion of students' interest in becoming employers and leaders themselves, as well as promotion of the commercialisation of knowledge created in RSU applied research and technology transfer, and knowledge services.
- Attraction of foreign students from both the existing priority regions, as well as the acquisition of new export markets and the expansion of the range of the programmes offered.
- Attracting EU funding, as well as other types of external financing (grants, scholarships, etc.) to the infrastructure projects planned by the University, to the development of human resources, research projects, modernisation of the study programmes, student activities and other purposes.
- Use of the latest technologies and solutions in the study process.
- Promotion of RSU competitiveness and international visibility through participation in evaluations carried out by independent organisations (the World Bank, PASCL, etc.)

2.4. THREATS

- Unfavourable demographic situation in the country, as well as opportunities to study elsewhere in the EU promote migration and the brain drain to other countries of the world. Decrease in the number of local students and the continuation of this trend in the long term.
- The rate of renewal of the academic and research staff is considerably longer than in other occupations. This can seriously jeopardize the quality of RSU activities (both in studies and research) in the long run.
- Increased competition among the EU universities in attracting students and teaching staff, as well as in research.
- Insufficient human resources for research processes, both research staff and support staff. Insufficient understanding of research as an interesting workplace in the community.
- The economic situation of the country and the overall stagnation in the EU may lead to a significant reduction in the level of RSU revenues: reduction in public funding. Lack of funding will not only hinder the implementation of development projects but also may endanger RSU activity in general.
- Unstable and low public funding for higher education (including residency in medicine) and science, lack of a national long-term strategy, lack of conformity between the research findings and competitive science. Unpredictable public policy with respect to long-term planning for the number of students.
- Lack of long-term national strategy for increasing the number of doctoral students and attracting them to research of Latvia after their defence of doctoral theses (there are no staff positions, no projects).
- Distribution of educational resources for the healthcare sector under control of several ministries.
- Changes to legislation that can adversely affect the opportunities of foreign students, the procedure for the election of the academic and research staff and the pay regulations.
- Average age of the academic staff, generational change.

3. CONFORMITY OF STRATEGY WITH PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The following EU, national and regional development planning documents, which prioritize the development of education and promotion of access to health care, were taken into consideration in the development of the Strategy:

EU DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS	
Title of the document	**Conformity of the Strategy**
The European Commission Strategy "Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth".	An EU-level long-term development planning document that prioritizes the growth of smart, sustainable and socially inclusive EU countries and proposes a number of flagship initiatives, including the initiative "Youth on the Move", which aims to improve the performance and international attractiveness of European higher education institutions and increase the overall quality of education and training in the EU in terms of excellence and equality by promoting student and teaching staff mobility, as well as by improving the situation in the area of youth employment.
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS	
National Reform Programme of Latvia for Implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy	A national planning document designed to ensure the achievement of the goals set in the Europe 2020 Strategy. It includes measures contributing to the implementation of the principle of lifelong learning, structural changes in vocational education, modernization of higher education, development of the scientific potential, modernization of the material and technical basis of higher education institutions and enhancement of resource efficiency, provision of equal access to higher education, improvement of the quality of studies and research activities and introduction of modern teaching methods.
"Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030"	A national long-term development planning document, which includes the opinion about the need for a paradigm shift in education: it has to be high quality, lifelong, creativity-oriented education that responds to the challenges of global competition and demography and is one of the prerequisites for changing the economic model. Taking into account that the world economy and technologies are changing rapidly, an efficient and flexible system of higher education is a decisive factor in competitiveness of Latvia and the value of human capital.
National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2020 (NDP2020)	A national medium-term development planning document , which defines the medium-term priorities in the field of education and science, emphasizing directions of action such as development of competence and development of research, innovation and higher education. Provision of access to higher education, implementation of support measures to higher education export, promotion of the competitiveness and consolidation of higher education, etc. are among the key tasks.
Smart Specialisation Strategy of Latvia (RIS3)	The goal of RIS3 is to increase the capacity for innovation as well as to create an innovation system that promotes and supports technological advancement in the national economy. A link between RSU strategy and the growth priorities and areas of smart specialisation determined by RIS3 is further analysed in this section.
The National Concept for the Development of Higher Education and Institutions of Higher Education in Latvia for 2013-2020	The strategic goal for the development of higher education in Latvia is defined within the framework of the concept: development of such a system of higher education, which, on the basis of cooperation between the public, private and academic environment, would ensure the competitive development of Latvia, national economy and higher education system in the European common space.

Guidelines for the Development of Education for 2014-2020.	A medium-term policy planning document, which defines the basic principles, goals and directions of education development policy. The major goal defined in the Education Development Policy Guidelines is high-quality and inclusive education for personal development, human well-being and sustainable national development.
Public Health Policy Guidelines for 2014-2020.	A medium-term policy planning document based on the Health 2020 World Health Organisation Strategy for the European Region. The major aim of public health policy is to increase the number of healthy life years of the population of Latvia and to prevent premature death by preserving, improving and restoring health. To achieve this goal, a number of actions are proposed, including: creation of high-quality, safe and sustainable healthcare service system, ensuring equal access to services for all residents of Latvia, ensuring partnerships and cross-sectoral cooperation, promoting equal health opportunities for all citizens. By preparing highly skilled healthcare professionals thus contributing to the development of a quality, safe and sustainable healthcare system, RSU will contribute to achieving the major goal of public health policy.
Regional Policy Guidelines for 2013-2019.	A medium-term policy planning document defining the regional policy in Latvia until 2019. A medium-term goal of regional policy is to promote development of entrepreneurship and creation of work places in regional territories, to promote the accessibility of jobs and services (*culture, health, social services, education, science, youth and sport), as well as to improve the quality and accessibility of services.*
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS	
Kurzeme Planning Region Sustainable Development Strategy for the period 2015-2030.	The long-term development planning document of regional significance, the goal of which is defined as "Smart Development", is aimed at changing the way of thinking and behaviour through investment in education, science and creative industries, changing the social environment and developing business thinking. The need to shift the emphasis from equalizing formal education to excellence; and a skill-oriented approach is being highlighted.
Riga Planning Region Sustainable Development Strategy for the period 2014-2030.	A long-term regional development planning document, which includes the priority "Flexible and Excellent Education" and the related direction of action - a link between innovative business, excellent research and higher education in the areas of smart development in the region.

RSU Strategy focuses on the implementation of the priorities for the growth of Latvia and development of specialisation areas that are defined in the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Latvia.

RSU plays an important role in the development of the smart specialisation field "Biomedicine, Medical Technologies, Biopharmacy and Biotechnologies" (i.e., health technologies). There are four main stages in the development of a new health technology: (1) acquisition of basic and practical knowledge, (2) development of technology, (3) clinical research (4) introduction of new products into market.

According to the analytical description of the ecosystem of the smart specialisation field "Biomedicine, Medical Technologies, Biopharmacy and Biotechnology", RSU plays an important role in this ecosystem, providing basic and practical knowledge. "The role of RSU education in ecosystem of health technologies is to prepare professionals who will work in clinical medicine or in development of public health policy or will carry out research in these areas."[8]

It is essential to emphasize that main development goals of RSU are in line with the growth priorities defined by the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Latvia.

[8] Analytical Description of the Ecosystem of the Smart Specialisation Area - "Biomedicine, Medical Technologies, Biopharmacy and Biotechnologies" November 2015 (Author: "FIDEA" Ltd).

- A modern education system that meets the requirements of the future labour market, which contributes to the transformation of the national economy and development of competences, entrepreneurial skills and creativity needed for implementation of RIS3 priorities at all levels of education (priority 5)

- Developed basis for knowledge (theoretical science and research infrastructure) and human capital in areas of knowledge where Latvia has comparative advantages and which are important in the transformation process of national economy: (1) knowledge-intensive bioeconomy, (2) biomedicine, medical technologies, biopharmacy and biotechnologies, (3) advanced materials, technologies and engineering systems, (4) intelligent energy and (5) ICT, as well as the EC-identified breakthrough technologies (nanotechnologies, micro and nano-electronics, photonics, advanced materials and production systems, biotechnologies) (priority 6).

4. LINK WITH RSU SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The basis of RSU research activity is focusing resources on conducting outstanding theoretical and applicable research corresponding to the epoch and topical needs and problems of the society, which is aimed at improving the quality of life and well-being of people, technology transfer and the targeted commercialisation of the newly-acquired knowledge.

RSU Scientific Institution Development Strategy for 2015- 2020, which was developed and approved by RSU Senate in 2015, is the main strategic document for planning and implementing the scientific activities of the University and it contributes to the achievement of the basic University goal of **providing education based on academic and innovative knowledge, skills and competences.**

RSU Scientific institution development strategy defines RSU research programme priorities in sectoral terms. Structurally the scientific direction of the University can be divided into three main research blocks: leading research sectors, growth research sectors and supportive or transversal research sectors[9] (Figure 6).

The research areas are based on the availability of RSU resources, the potential of sustainable development, the experience and reputation of previous years, the existence of strategic management, the role of the relevant research sector to the University overall development and compliance with global trends in life, health and social sciences.

PILLARS	**CLINICAL MEDICINE**	**BIOMEDICINE**	**REHABILITATION**	**PUBLIC HEALTH**
BASIC RESEARCH	**MOLECULAR MEDICINE**	**STRUCTURAL BIOLOGY**	**RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES**	**SOCIAL/CULTURAL/ENVIRONMENTAL/PUBLIC HEALTH**
LEADING RESEARCH SECTORS	ONCOLOGY			
	INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND IMMUNOLOGY			
	OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES		OCCUPATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH	
	REGENERATIVE MEDICINE, TISSUE BIOENGINEERING			
GROWING SECTORS	DOSAGE FORM TECHNOLOGIES (PHARMACY)			
			REHABILITATION AND PUBLIC AGEING	
			CHRONIC DISEASES AND TREATMENT ALGORITHMS	
	NEUROSCIENCE / RESEARCH OF HUMAN BRAIN DISORDERS			
	MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH			
	NUCLEAR MEDICINE, RADIOLOGY AND MODERN VISUALISATION METHODS			
			SOCIAL SCIENCES	
TRANSVERSAL SECTORS	ANATOMY, EMBRIOLOGY, HISTOLOGY, PATHOLOGY, STRUCTURAL BIOLOGY			
	ANAESTHESIOLOGY AND INTENSIVE CARE			
	EMERGENCY AND MILITARY MEDICINE			
			HEALTHCARE SCIENCE	
			PUBLIC HEALTH	
				SOCIAL POLICY

[9] Transversal research sectors ("horizontal sectors" in the EU planning documents) are an important element in the development of the basis for scientific activities. Some of the topics are dedicated to meeting the needs of the end user, however, it is the practical interaction with the consumer that gives such bodies so much practical experience that often results in high citation publications and allows the University to position its competences in the mentioned topics.

Figure 6. Priorities of RSU research programme

The priorities of the research programme cover the programme content of all RSU programme directions, and the research work of the academic staff and students can be provided.

RSU promotes the development of research activities among the University students - to increase the competitiveness of RSU students on the local and international level. Main activities to be implemented:

- Use of the University resources for students' research work (mentoring ability of the research staff and resources of RSU laboratories);
- Ensuring the activities of the students' research groups;
- Organisation of science-related events (International Student Conference, Science Days, Science Afternoons, Baltic Olympiad in Anatomy, etc.)

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY

RSU Strategy (hereinafter - the Strategy) is a medium-term (5 years) planning document, which in accordance with vision, mission and values defined for the University long-term development, determines RSU priorities, main developmental goals and objectives that are to be reached for achieving the each goal set. In addition, a detailed action plan is developed for the effective implementation of the Strategy, which defines the actions (activities and events) planned within the tasks and sub-tasks to be implemented, the sources for resources needed for their implementation and RSU departments responsible for the implementation of the actions are indicated. In the process of developing the strategy, the University activities are assessed under the six thematic plans, which being the main transversal factors are essential prerequisites for the development of the University:

1. Development Plan for the Study Programmes
2. Human Resources Development Plan
3. Development Plan for Internationalisation
4. Cooperation Development Plan
5. Management Development Plan
6. Resource Development Plan

The conceptual structure of the Strategy can be seen in Figure 7

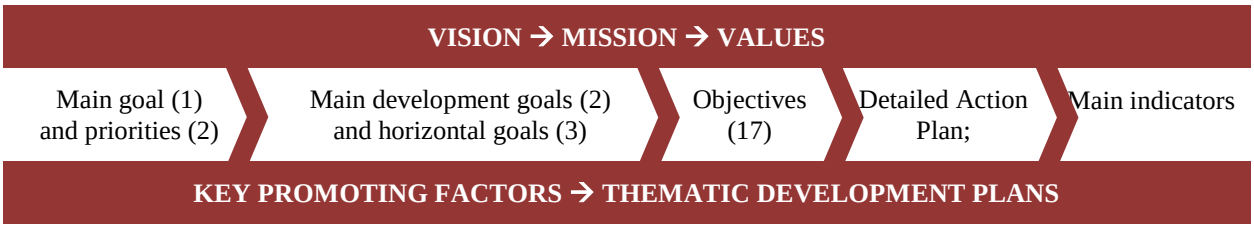

Figure 7. Conceptual structure of RSU Strategy

Planning, development, implementation and control of the Strategy are carried out in accordance with RSU internal procedure, which is schematically shown in the diagram of the Strategy development and implementation process (Figure 8).

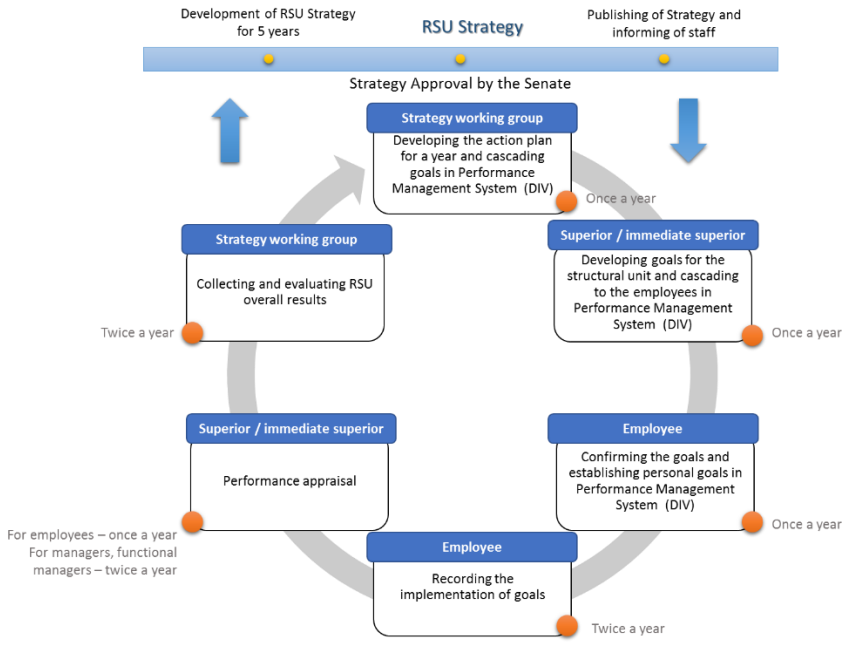

Figure 8. RSU Strategy Management Scheme

By RSU Rector's decree No 2-3/198 as of 23 September 2016 a working group was set up to develop RSU medium-term (2017-2021) development strategy. The team consists of the Vice-Rector for Development, the Vice-Rector for Education, the Vice-Rector for Science, Deans of the Faculty of Medicine and of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Directors of the Development and Project Department, Study Department, Research Department, Department of Infrastructure, Information Technology Department, Human Resources Department and Finance Department, as well as the analyst of business processes and data. After the Strategy is developed, it is reviewed and approved by RSU Senate.

To manage RSU Strategy effectively, it is regularly updated: each year in the autumn the evaluation of the results is carried out within the period of a calendar year. The Strategy working group develops a short-term strategy and an action plan for the following year.

In order to ensure the implementation of RSU strategic goals and their follow-up, an electronic Performance Management System (DIV) was introduced that allows cascading tasks defined by RSU Strategy for departments and particular employees and provides feedback to RSU management on implementation of each individual strategic goal.

In addition, a system of strategic indicators was set up on RSU management team level. The system consists of the main indicators to be achieved as a result of the implementation of the Strategy and whose progress is regularly assessed within Rector's Office.