

## Rīga Stradiņš University program of study „Health Sport Professional”

### Self-assessment Report

#### **Programmes of Study Aims and Tasks**

##### **Programmes of Study Aims:**

To prepare highly qualified and competitive health sport specialists who creatively and professionally can be engaged in the field of health sport (fitness), effectively use of their knowledge and skills in client’s health strengthening, improvement and disease prevention.

##### **Programmes of Study Tasks:**

1. Ensure acquisition of the needed capacity for the fitness trainers.
2. Promote skills for creative and critical thinking, develop in-depth understanding about a role of the health sport professional in society.
3. Create motivation for continuing education and acquire skills to educate themselves throughout their lives.

Graduates can work in health sport clubs, fitness facilities, sport organizations and federations. Graduates have acquired the necessary knowledge, competences and skills to ensure appropriate and effective health sport activities for the people at different age according to their health condition, physical fitness and the purpose, which the particular person wants to achieve through physical exercises. Health sport specialist can monitor sporting activities both for groups where participants are at different age, physical fitness and occupation (children, elderly, sedentary and manual workers) and individually, develop the individual training programmes.

Over and over again, content and aims of the programme of study has been set forth to employers and representatives from the professional organizations, have been taken advices and implemented recommendations from the professional

<p>organizations concerning the improvement of the process of study.</p> <p>Director of the programme of study is a Member of the Board at the Latvia Association of Professionals in Fitness and Health Promotion. Often, during the Board's meetings are discussed issues concerning the education for specialists in fitness, their certification, incl., the Rīga Stradiņš University programme of study "Health Sport Professional".</p>
<p><b>Programme of Study Topicality</b></p>
<p>Programme's topicality and the necessity determine today's human health's close dependence on a healthy lifestyle, for what an important component is optimal physical activity or application of physical exercises for health strengthening and upkeep. In year 2004 the World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledge a global strategy concerning the nutrition, physical activities and health by linking together prior matters that most of all affect the whole public's health – physical activity and nutrition. Stressed that an inactivity and unhealthy food are the leading non-communicable disease causing factors, including cardiovascular diseases, type II diabetes mellitus, certain forms of cancer, so significantly affecting rates of the global diseases, disability and mortality. The physical activity has an important role in case of the metabolic syndrome. For example, physical activity reduces blood pressure, increases high density lipoprotein cholesterol, improves blood sugar control mechanism for people who are overweight, even if you do not see weight loss, reduces colon and breast cancer contingency. Physical activity makes a significant contribution of other non-communicable disease prevention, not just those associated with overweight and obesity. As mentioned in the World Health Organization annual report in year 2002, 60% of all deaths and 47% of all diseases in the world are caused directly by the non-communicable diseases, predicted that by year 2020 these figures could increase to 73% and 60%, correspondingly. WHO recommends an increasing focus on physical activity as an effective aid for the improvement of public health and quality of life. Regularly dealing with the optimal range and intensity physical exercises can significantly reduce the morbidity and mortality from non-communicable diseases. Therefore, very important is educating both children and adults about the optimal physical activity, a variety of physical exercises and their importance and use of health building and disease</p>

prevention. Very topical is educating the patients about healthy lifestyle, appropriate physical exercises for the health promotion. It is therefore important that such education develops at the higher educational establishments, where the main programs of study are directed to medicine and health care. Program of study "Health Sports Professionals" graduates are provided opportunities for continued study in the Rīga Stradiņš University bachelor degree program of study "Health Sports" (submitted for accreditation), in which a special attention is paid to questions concerning physical activities for people with various disabilities. Whereas, in the program of study "Health Sport Professional" are enrolled and have studied many (more than 20) medical and health care graduates, as well as many medical college graduates.

Latvian population health indicators according to the UN World Health Organization (WHO) main public health assessment criteria are among the worst in comparison with other European countries. Morbidity and mortality rate in the Latvian is one of the highest or the highest, such as mortality from cardiovascular disease, but life expectancy is one of the shortest in the Europe. Latvia population's physical activity compared with other European countries is one of the lowest. According to the Latvian Central Statistical Bureau data in the physical activities are involved only 35.7% of the Latvia population. Should be also taken into account that a large proportion of people engaged in physical exercise, make it weak and ineffective from the health perspective.

Qualified professionals with extensive knowledge in the sector of health sports – fitness trainers will make a major contribution to the promotion of physical activity and the effective application of physical exercises to strengthen the health and prevent diseases.

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### **Study Content and Organization**

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The program is developed in accordance with national first-level professional higher education standard and sports trainer's standard. The program includes training courses, designed for trainer's profession standard.

The training program is realized in five semesters (2.5 academic years). Study program consists of theoretical and practical training courses, placement and qualification work, together 83 credits. The program included training courses according

to the national first level professional higher education standard and, are divided:

1. Comprehensive courses of study (20 credit points);
2. Obligatory courses of study in the sector (26 credit points);
3. Elective courses of study in the sector (12 credit points, from which are chosen and acquired 4 credit points);
4. Courses of study in professional specialization (9 credit points).

For the qualification work are prescribed 8 credit points, for the placement outside the educational establishment – 16 credit points.

In academic year 2009/2010 has increased a number of contact hours in such study courses as Sports Medicine, Principles of Physiotherapy and Basics of Healthy Nutrition, because students consider these courses as very important and students' satisfaction with the teaching of these courses is high.

The title of the study course „Information Knowledge” has been changes as „Information Literacy”, within which the students will be trained to work with the scientific information databases in the sector.

On purpose to successfully achieve program's aims and implement tasks the study courses in semesters are arranged in a specific order. During the first semester, principally, are mastered comprehensive study courses, during the second semester – the core courses in the sector – "Basics of the Health Sport", "Anatomy," "Physiology of Sport", “Sport biochemistry”. In the third semester students start acquisition of courses in the professional specialization. During the 4-th and 5-th semesters students continue acquisition of the courses in professional specialization, and is foreseen a placement and development of the qualification work. The last semester is foreseen for a placement, presentation of the qualification work and taking a State Examination.

Realization of the programme of study is ensured by 30 skilled university lecturers:

- 6 professors;
- 5 associated professors;
- 10 docents;

- 6 lecturers;

- 2 assistants;

among them 2 Dr.habil. and 19 with a doctoral degree. 70% from involved in the realization of the program of study academic staff are with a doctoral degree. University lecturers are from 12 RSU structural subdivisions and from Latvian Academy of Sports Education. 90% from the university lecturers involved in the programme's realization come from the Rīga Stradiņš University permanent staff. If necessary, in the learning process is involved teaching-support staff, too.

Academic staff's selection, renewal, training and development policy in general is determined and governed by the RSU Management, Human Resources and relevant departments. In most study courses is involved academic staff selected and prepared for training doctors and other health professionals. In the study courses concerning a profession of Health Sport Trainer and his professional qualification are selected and involved qualified professionals with an appropriate education (at least with a Master's degree). At the end of each academic year at the Department of Sports, Nutrition and Education takes place evaluation of the quest lecturers, as well as a questionnaire among students concerning the quality of instruction and satisfaction with content of the courses and university lecturers.

Academic staff regularly participates in scientific conferences. Professional disciplines' teachers regularly participate in various professional development and exchange events. During the re-election period all lecturers, at least once, improve their pedagogical competence in the professional development program: "Universities didactics: contemporary theory and practice". In the development and implementation of this program are involved the leading Latvian doctors of pedagogy, professors.

Content of the study courses is perfected and improved by the concrete RSU unit, which implements the course. Professional specialization courses are perfected and improved every year. For example, last year study course "Cardio Training Apparatus" was supplemented by tests of aerobic capacity using ergometer Monark Ergomedik 839E and the heart rate monitor Polar 810i. In the frame of the program of study the students are introduced with the five modern tests to detect aerobic operational capability. Testing and evaluation of the aerobic operational capability is necessary to assess

objectively each person's physical fitness and to draw up an optimal training program. In the course of study students are introduced with the latest cardio training apparatus programs in common cardio training apparatus in Latvia and their application possibilities. The practical classes in the course of study “Power Training Apparatus” practical classes for the students are held at several well-equipped fitness clubs equipped with the latest training apparatus.

During the process of the program of study implementation for the students is granted an individual approach and feedback. Already, during the enrolment with students are conducted individual interviews. Students have opportunities to ask questions about curriculum, learning process, etc. Students have the opportunity to communicate with the study program directors and university lecturers using the RSU e-mail system, as well as to students are available the university lecturers' office and mobile phones. Annually is carried out student's questionnaire concerning their satisfaction with the content of courses, teaching quality, the satisfaction with the arrangement of space and material and technical provision. If the students' satisfaction with the course of study is low, then are informed the relevant departments and directors of the program of study, and are carried out improvement actions.

After having summarized the students' questionnaire results, quality of the organization and presentation of the study courses in average was assessed in seven criteria with 8,3 points in 10-point system. Average assessment of the comprehensive training courses is 7,9 points, obligatory courses of study in the sector – 8,1 point and courses of study in professional specialization – 9,2 points. Results of the questionnaire show that the teaching of several comprehensive and obligatory courses of study in the sector should be perfected and improved. Were carried out discussions with the university lecturers, whom courses of study were with the lowest score. The study course with the lowest score was replaced with another course of study. During the previous academic year have been done several improvements in the premises and classes, and perfected technical equipment; are submitted more than 10 requests to the RSU Governing Body concerning the repair of premises and purchase of equipment and inventory for the needs of the programme of study “Health Sport Specialist”. In the previous academic year were renovated Sports, Nutrition and Education Department facilities, purchased necessary for gymnastic exercises inventory; purchased cycle-ergometer Monark Ergomedik 839 for

performing the latest and more precise physical operation capability tests and train the students to test and evaluate physical operational capability; purchased 10 new heart rhythm monitors Polar RS800CX, different types of body composition analyzers, calliper and other equipment.

All lectures are provided with the computers and video projectors. Classes in the professional courses of study are arranged at several fitness clubs with the best and progressive equipment.

Are concluded five (5) cooperation agreements on providing the process of study and more than 30 agreements on ensuring placement at the fitness institutions.

The placement is arranged in the fitness institutions all over the Latvia. Faculty of Rehabilitation has worked out and its Council has approved the Regulations for the placement.

Placement is an obligatory course of study, an integral part of the professional programme of study.

Aim of the placement is a practical application of the competences, knowledge and skills acquired in the theoretical and practical classes in contact with the fitness club (institution) clients.

Placement tasks and expected activity:

- Develop necessary for a fitness trainer professional habits and appropriate personal qualities.
- Acquire the ability to communicate with the practice managers, clients, administration authorities and other persons.
- Correctly, without interfering, to observe and study supervisor's communication with clients.
- Participate in organizing and managing activities by executing the supervisor's tasks.
- With the supervisor's support draw programs and plans for training.
- Demonstrate self-critical attitude towards the placement and to integrate in the existing experience placement consultant's recommendations and reviews.
- Develop ability to work independently and assume responsibility.

- Acquire skills to think creatively by applying the LEAN management fundamental principles.
- Demonstrate excellent work habits, incl., punctuality and qualitative execution of the entrusted tasks.

Students undergo the placement in facilities with which the RSU has concluded the agreements (fitness establishments, sports clubs). Students, also, may make a proposal to the director of the program of study for a new contract with a fitness authority in any Latvia's region. To one place of practice are appointed 1-5 students. For the placement are prescribed 16 credit points (CP) during the following periods:

- 4-th semester – 6CP

- 5-th semester – 10CP

Length of the placement during the 4-th semester is 6 CP or 240 hours of study, of which 50 are contact hours with the practice's supervisor and 190 – independent work hours. During the contact hours probationer observes how works the supervisor, conducts training classes in the presence of a supervisor, discusses and analyses performed independent work. Half of the practice hours (120 hours) are intended to devote to preparing the practice description, for completing a diary, drawing up a training program and plan, preparing for self-management classes, practice tests and preparation of reports. 40 hours – up watching practice, when the student is watching how the other trainers conduct trainings and communicate with the clients, and 30 hours – for independent work.

Length of the placement during the 5-th semester is 10 CP or 400 hours of study, of which 50 are contact hours with the practice's supervisor and 350 – independent work hours. 200 hours are intended to devote to preparing the practice description, for completing a diary, drawing up a training program and plan, preparing for self-management classes, practice tests and preparation of reports, 70 hours – up watching practice, when the student is watching how the other trainers conduct trainings and communicate with the clients, and 80 hours – for independent work.

The placement is managed by a supervisor with a higher education in sports.

Main tasks for a supervisor:

1. To promote development, improvement and application of the trainees' competences, knowledge and skills in practice in contact with the fitness club (institution) visitors (clients).
2. Organize trainees' work and monitor performance of the planned work.
3. Explain various situations arising in the practical work.
4. Discuss and analyse trainees' practical activities.
5. Assess trainees' skills and competences.

Report on practice, assessment of practice and other practice's documentation at the end of each semester are examined by a person in charge for the practice - a lecturer from the RSU.

Annually, at the Department of Sport, Nutrition and Education are analysed results concerning the students' achievements, weighted up reasons causing poor results in the studies. In case of necessity, about the results and identified shortcomings in the required knowledge, skills and competences are informed directors and academic staff from the other departments.

### **Studies and Evaluation of Knowledge**

Programs of study for students are available in e-learning. Available in e-learning materials for study and methods are improved each academic year. Till the end of year 2011 e-learning will be available in more than 70% of study courses.

All lectures are provided with computers and video projectors and internet connections.

Expected learning outcomes for each study course are set out in the study guides and articles are freely available to students in the RSU website. A wider account concerning the study courses and their content can be find in the description of the program of study at the departments, which provides detailed information about the aims of the program study, acquirable knowledge and practical skills, the lesson topics and literature. Before starting each course of study, the lecturer informs students about the requirements during the course and tests at the end of the course. Therapeutic

The main forms of training are lectures, seminars and practical classes, where according to the program of study and the program of work during the course will be outlined the learning material and taught necessary practical skills and abilities. Much attention is paid to students' independent work, presentation and preparation of the projects. Task of the lecturers is to assist students to organize self-study, where appropriate, offer advice and consult. In the program are used the following teaching methods: concretization of the acquired theoretical and practical knowledge in the seminars, problem analysis, development of individual and group projects and other methods. Learning of the program is based on the latest information technologies.

During the admission process with each entrant is made an individual interview, is established entrant's motivation to study and get a fitness trainer qualification, are assessed student's abilities to become a good professional, tested entrant's physical ability to work and given recommendations for the improvement of physical performance and useful for the profession skills till starting to master professional courses of study. In the program are enrolled students with different level of knowledge and different physical fitness and useful for the profession skills. Approximately one third of entrants are with other higher education, acquired professional qualification in another sector and Bachelor's or Master's Degree. As evidenced by the centralized exam score, for the part of entrants level of theoretical knowledge is relatively low, but they have high level of skills which are useful for the profession, such as many years training experience in artistic gymnastics, dancing and various sports, where acquired skills, abilities and fitness can be useful in the fitness trainer's profession.

In all courses of study academic staff provided academic counseling for students in amount of 25% from the number of lecture hours and 2 hours before the exam or theoretical test. In many study subjects during the semester are several intermediate tests (colloquia and other forms of testing).

With the assessment requirements students are introduced before starting each course of study. Requirements in tests and examination previously are discussed and approved at the department meetings.

Requirements in the professional courses of study and state examinations are coordinated with the changing requirements in the labour market. Chairman of the State Examination Commission and at least half of the members of the Commission are

representatives from Employers and Professional Associations. In academic year 2010/2011 Chairman of the State Examination Commission was Chairman of the Latvian Association of Fitness and Health Promotion.

### **Study provision and management**

In the management of the program of study are respecting democratic principles, listened to students' opinion, observed students' suggestions. Relationship between the administrative, academic staff and students are clearly defined in the Study Regulations, Study Internal Rules of Procedure with which students acquaint and sign before studying the studies.

In the above mentioned documents are foreseen mechanisms how to prevent conflicts and solve problems.

In the provision of all RSU programs is involved administrative and technical staff, acting pursuant to the RSU laws and regulations.

### **Scientific Research (Creative) work of the Academic Staff and Students**

The scientific research work of the academic staff widely is related to the delivered courses of study, as shown by the scientific publications of the lecturers involved in the program of.

During the last year of study all students work out and present a qualification work. The procedure of development and presentation of the qualification work is regulated by the agreed at the Deans Council and confirmed at the RSU Senate Regulations for the development and Presentation of the Qualification Work in the Programme of Study "Health Sport Professional". Requirements for the development of the qualification work are approximated to the requirements concerning the Bachelor's degree qualification work, and the Qualification and Bachelor's work Regulations are similar. The qualification Work is independently performed research with an aim to give an opportunity to assess student's readiness to apply acquired knowledge and skills in solving research and professional problems.

Subject for the research is selected in collaboration between a student, a prospective supervisor, Head of the program of study and head of the academic department. Topics, supervisors and deadline for submitting is approved by Faculty

Council pursuant to the RSU law and regulations.

All the Qualification Works are reviewed. Not later than 2 weeks before the foreseen presentation the Faculty Council affirms a list of reviewers.

The research is done on topical issues in the sector and profession of a fitness trainer.

Academic staff, on a regular basis, participates in scientific conferences, international including.

In the previous academic year was finished financed by the Republic of Latvia Ministry for Education and Science scientific research project “Testing, evaluation of the aerobic capacity for work and potential improvements and role in strengthening health and disease prevention”. Within the project, in collaboration with the Latvian Olympic Unit Laboratory were approbated and assessed various methods for the capacity for work tests. 114 people were tested with five indirect tests applying velo-ergometer Monark Ergomedic 839 and heart rhythm monitor Polar 810i, and the results of these tests were compared with the results received with a direct gas analysis applying the latest cardiopulmonary diagnostic system. For all the program of study students was given an opportunity to participate in this research and acquaint with the various tests concerning the aerobic capacity for work, incl., at the Latvian Olympic Unit Laboratory with the direct gas analysis. Some of the students’ researches are directly connected with this research project.

#### **Quality assurance and guaranties**

The Rīga Stradiņš University has implemented Internal Quality Control System, which is directly related to the realization of the program of study “Health Sport Professional”, also. The RSU administration system has been audited and considered as complying with ISO 9001:2008 standard requirements.

Over 90% of graduates work in acquired profession according to the received qualification. Carried out among the graduates questionnaires show that graduates are satisfied with their choice and highly value the program of study. Quality of the program as good and very good count 89.2% of graduates, but as average – 11,8%. Quality of the lectures completely satisfy 64,7%, rather satisfy – 29,4%, rather dissatisfy 5,9%. Research work completely satisfy 64,3%, rather

satisfy 35,7%. Placement in specialty completely satisfy 70,6%, rather satisfy – 11,8%, but rather dissatisfy – 17,6%. The results give proof that the placement places and supervisors should be selected more precisely, as well as should be continued work with a purpose to improve the quality of studies.

Annually, in the self-assessment report is given assessment of the program of study strong and weak parts, assessment of academic resources and technical provision. As the strong part of the program of study can be considered high qualification of the academic staff and quality of teaching the courses, good material and technical provision.

As the weak part of the program of study can be considered essentially different level of previous education and professional business skills. About one fourth from the students are with a Bachelor's or Master's degree, among them students with the higher education in medicine, while part of the students are with a weak secondary education. In terms of professional business skills a part of students is with a great trainer's work experience, different certificates and good gymnastics class management skills, while the other students do not have such skills. Therefore, it is problematic to teach some courses according to students' training and ability level. For example, this problem is solved by organizing the courses in foreign language on three levels. However, not in all courses can be organized such groups, as well as, at least, in courses concerning the respective sector and the professional expertise is necessary high enough level of knowledge and practical training for all students. Students are offered to acquire one of three specializations. Students' suitability for acquiring a particular specialization is evaluated during the first year of studies. In the 2-nd semester are offered several elective courses – Basic steps in aerobics, Basic elements in pilates, Aesthetic group gymnastics, which are aimed to increase the students' weak parts prior starting to acquire courses in professional specialization.

Programs weak part, also, is that has not be developed international cooperation with the similar programs of study abroad, and, yet, in the program of study are not involved international students, not implemented mobility of the students and the academic staff.

Have been provided possibilities to continue studies, in case the program is closed, reorganized or other changes occur. Has been signed a Contract with the Latvian Academy of Sports Education (LASE) concerning the opportunity to continue

education in LASE implemented first level professional higher education program of study "Education and Sports Professional", if the realized at RSU program of study is terminated.

Program of study is compared with those at the Austria Sports Academy, Vienna University, German BSA (Bildungspartner) Academy, as well as with the US National Health and Fitness Academy and others implemented in universities and colleges.

Austria Sports Academy is the state educational establishment where are trained fitness instructors and trainers. Trainer's education is the top sport education in Austria. Fitness trainers are educated three semesters (500 educational units). One semester is four complete weeks and five weekends. Education of the Austria fitness trainers is recognized in other European countries, too, what could not, always, be said about the private fitness educational establishments.

At the Vienna University can be acquired a Bachelor's degree in health sport. Duration of studies is 6 semesters; in the semester 114 hours, incl., 59 hours – basic studies, 43 – specialization and 12 – elective courses.

The German BSA Academy is the largest fitness educational establishment in the Europe with a great number of branches in Germany and the other European countries. It is a private educational establishment with very flexible educational system, which quickly adapts request for definite professionals. At the Academy are four kinds of curricula with various training periods, full and half time and distance learning. At the Academy can be acquired more than 20 qualifications in the sectors of health sport and fitness.

In US the fitness trainer's education can be acquired both in higher educational establishments and colleges, duration of studies – from 4 to 6 semesters.

Programs of study are comparable. Courses for study in foreign heath sports and fitness trainer's programs of study are on a level with ours and, mainly, are acquired knowledge and competences which, also, are included in the developed in Latvia sport trainer's professional standard. Offered by us programme of study differs with more extensive number of comprehensive courses and a number of hours in them (20 credit points, 800 hours). Such requirement is defined in the regulations concerning the state first level professional higher education standard. In the list of comprehensive courses are

included courses of study which can be useful for a professional fitness trainer.

Compared with the Latvian Academy of Sport Education curriculum “Professional in Education and Sports”, in the RSU curriculum “Health Sport Professional” more attention is paid to health education issues. In the curricula is a specific course of study “Basics of Sport for Health” and courses “Sport Medicine and Sport for Disabled”, “Basics of Physiotherapy”. In these courses of study in-depth is given knowledge, skills and competences in using physical exercises in health strengthening and disease prevention for people in different age with different physical fitness and health condition.

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