

ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

Institution: Kaitseväe Ühendatud Õppeasutused (*The Estonian National Defence College*)

Assessment committee:

Mr Paul Mitchell, Mega Mitchell Consulting Ltd, director – *Chair*
Ms Maarja-Liisa Maasik, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, student
Colonel Egils Leščinskis, Latvian National Defence Academy, rector
Dr Hannu Kiehelä, Training institute of Prison and Probation Services, director
Major Hardi Lämmergas, Air Surveillance Wing Commander

Coordinator: Ms Maiki Udam

Dates of the assessment visit: 15-17 October 2013

Assessment committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA: 23 October 2013

Assessment committee received the comments of the institution under accreditation: 11 November 2013

Assessment committee approved the final version of component assessment with 5 votes in favour and 0 votes against.

Date: 11 November 2013

I Summary of the assessment (mark with 'X'):

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Organisational management and performance	X			
Teaching and learning	X			
RDC		X		
Service to society	X			

Comments:

The Estonian National Defence College (ENDC) was founded in 1923 and was re-founded in its present form in 1998. It is based in Tartu, with a surface area of approximately 50,000 sq meters. It has the status of an institution of professional higher education of national defence within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence (MoD); it is directly responsible to the Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF). It provides vocational and higher education as follows:

Vocational education:

- Senior Non-commissioned Officer Military Leadership Curriculum

Professional higher education in:

- Land Force Military Leadership
- Air Force Military Leadership
- Naval Military Leadership

Master's education in:

- Land Force Military Leadership

There are currently 205 students as follows:

Vocational:	29
Professional HE:	149
Masters:	16
Junior Officer Continuing Education:	11

The annual budget amounts to some €8m, of which just over 16% is directly managed at College level. Around half of total expenditure relates to staffing costs, comprising 213 staff. This high staffing: student ratio reflects the high support demands involved in delivering programmes with significant field, practical and applied elements.

The Committee established through its investigations that the College is well regarded nationally and locally; it has a strong brand and students speak very supportively about the quality of education they receive there and about their preparation for professional life. Alumni endorsed the quality of the preparation they had received; and the quality and fitness-for-purpose of the College’s graduates was confirmed by employers.

The Assessment Committee was impressed by the quality of the College’s self-evaluation report; it was analytical, self-critical and in general demonstrated a high awareness of both ENDC’s strengths and also of the challenges for the future.

During the visit, the Assessment Committee met a wide range of staff, students, alumni and employers and was able to discuss all major issues in a courteous, informative and professional manner. The Committee is grateful to the Commandant and his team for the courtesy, openness and efficiency with which they were received.

Commendations:

The Assessment Committee **commends:**

1. The quality of ENDC's SER and the level of constructive self-awareness it demonstrates
2. The clear leadership and sense of purpose across the College
3. The quality of education it provides in meeting the needs of employers and in responding very effectively to their changing requirements
4. The College's approach to ensuring that staff and students have extensive and accessible mechanisms for providing views and feedback on both academic and non-academic issues
5. The range, quality and high level of maintenance of the College's teaching and learning infrastructure, its general facilities and the quality of accommodation and recreational facilities available to students
6. The in-service training provided to other organisations outside the MoD's domain (such as the 'War and Disaster Medicine' training programme delivered to Tartu University's medical students)
7. The supervision process for preparing student papers/projects
8. The use of the e-learning environment to support in-service training

Worthy of Recognition:

The Committee was impressed by the effectiveness of communication within and across the College, which it believes to be **worthy of recognition**. A suite of thoughtful and comprehensive feedback mechanisms are in place across the College, for both staff and students. The Committee found ample evidence of actions taken in response to structured feedback. Informal feedback was also welcomed and responded to in a purposeful way. This helped to promote a strong culture of collegiality and mutual support across the College's community.

Recommendations:

The Assessment Committee **recommends:**

1. That the College considers whether some external representation on the College Council and /or its Sub-Committees could strengthen the College's capacity for self-reflection and development
2. That the EDF, with ENDC, could with advantage review the career structure for military personnel, so as to provide incentive for those who wish to undertake a period of teaching or to develop a longer term career in teaching in ENDC and similar establishments, and to ensure a secure future supply of high-quality and well-motivated teaching staff
3. That the College continues to support short-term staff attachments and placements (in both directions) with other appropriate organisations, so as to deliver the benefits of mobility
4. That ENDC continue its work on developing its own self-awareness by developing performance indicators which would allow it to assess its own relative performance and comparative value for money.
5. That ENDC work with EDF to develop a more pro-active strategy for promoting military careers for women and for increasing the number of female entrants to ENDC
6. That ENDC determine a timescale for implementing the teaching of a subject in English
7. That ENDC be asked to raise awareness within EDF command, that students would benefit in their career planning from knowing earlier in their study process about their future positions (postings)
8. That the College should continue to plan creatively for the widespread exposure of staff and students to the international environment
9. That the existing strategy for research and development activities should be articulated more clearly through the creation of an implementation plan that defines more selectively and precisely the key research areas on which research activity will be based and which sets out personnel policy, milestones and spending plans for its achievement
10. That incentives for increased staff participation in research activity should be further articulated.

II Assessment areas and sub-areas

1 ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE
<p>The Assessment Committee found that all the requirements are met. Under the direction of the Commandant, the College has a very clear management structure, with all roles clearly defined. Strategic planning and review reflecting national priorities is well-established. The College Academic Council sits at the heart of an effective academic committee structure.</p> <p>The Assessment Committee has suggested that ENDC consider the inclusion of a greater degree of externality in its governance arrangements as a means of further enhancing the College’s capacity for self-reflection and development.</p> <p>Overall: Conforms to requirements</p>

1.1 General management	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has defined its role in the Estonian society. The development plan and the related action plans of a higher education institution arise from the concrete purposes that are built on its mission, vision and core values, and that consider the country’s priorities and society’s expectations. Key results of a higher education institution have been defined. The leadership of a higher education institution conducts the preparation and implementation of development and action plans and includes the members and other stakeholders in this work. Liability at all management levels has been defined and described, and it supports the achievement of institutional purposes and the coherent performance of core processes. Internal and external communications of a higher education institution (including marketing and image building) are purposeful and managed.</i></p>							
<p>The ENDC is an institution of professional higher education for national defence under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence and</p>							

is directly accountable to the Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces. In accordance with the Estonian Defence Forces Organisation Act, the ENDC is a unit of the centralised Estonian Defence Forces, while also being an institution of higher education under the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act. It is headed by a Commandant as Head of the institution and he is advised on academic affairs by an Academic Council, comprising staff and students from the College.

ENDC has a very clear role in Estonian society in supporting very directly the strategy, aims and objectives of the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF). In 1998 the ENDC began as an institution of higher vocational education studies and diploma studies for land force officers. From the academic year 2003/2004, higher vocational education studies and diploma studies were replaced by 3.5-year professional higher education studies, a system which was in turn modified in 2004/2005 to reflect the European 3+2 system of study. In 2005 the Master's curriculum for land force officers was established as a continuation of professional higher education studies. According to the needs of the EDF, for entry to Master's studies, an applicant must have 3-6 years of service experience to ensure the necessary knowledge and skills for completing a Master's education, and in addition meet the needs of the EDF career system by having leaders with adequate qualifications occupying posts at different command levels. In 2008, the air force military leadership curriculum was introduced, followed by the naval military leadership curriculum in 2010. With the establishment of the naval curriculum, officer education is now available for all the armed services.

The Non-commissioned Officer School (NCO School) of the EDF was subsequently also merged with the ENDC to deliver increased educational efficiency. The aim of the NCO School is to train non-commissioned officers and reservist platoon commanders. For the EDF, integrating non-commissioned and commissioned officer training into a single institution enables the synchronization and harmonization of officer education for different command levels.

The current College Development Plan and associated action plan cover the period 2011-2015. Strategic planning is fully discussed by the Academic Council, on which students are represented by 5 members. The Assessment Committee noted that responsibilities for implementation of the plan are clearly allocated and that institutional progress against targets is monitored annually. Financial support is monitored on a 3-monthly basis. A new national defence development plan for the period 2013–2022, will be a key driver for a review of the ENDC development plan, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2013.

The Assessment Committee noted that the Commandant is advised on College policy and strategic planning by the Academic Council. The Council has three Sub-Committees – Academic Committee, Study Committee and Development Committee. The Council and its Sub-Committees consist entirely of College staff and students. Whilst the Assessment Committee notes that the College seeks advice from an External Advisory Body and that there may be legal restrictions, the Assessment Committee

recommends that the College consider whether some external representation on the College Council and /or its Sub-Committees could strengthen the College's capacity for self-reflection and development. The inclusion for example of external members with pedagogic backgrounds could bring a new dimension to College discussions.

Members of the College pay careful attention to its external reputation and staff and students participate in many local civilian events; clear standards of behaviour are expected and are maintained; the presence of the College in Tartu is welcomed.

The College has consolidated its quality assurance system, with strong systems put in place for the annual review of its programmes supported both by management information provision and effective student consultation mechanisms. The Assessment Committee heard from both staff and students that they were regularly consulted about the operation and planning of the College and they were able to provide examples of how staff and student feedback had influenced College decisions. Employers were very satisfied with the quality of the College's graduates and alumni reported that their programmes of study had equipped them appropriately for their careers. The Committee agreed that the current QA system was adequate, but noted that further proposed improvements were to be debated in December 2013.

Students are very involved in the College's decision making processes and are represented at all levels. Students have their own representative body (Cadet Corps) which represents their interests in College governance through membership of all major decision-making bodies. ENDC has a very strong student feedback system. There is a strong formal feedback system based on questionnaires on all aspects of the student experience. Students can give and receive regular feedback. Students confirmed to the Assessment Committee that ENDC takes student feedback very seriously into account and gave examples relating to:

- Improvements to the Study Information System
- Follow up action on a report of unsatisfactory teaching
- Changes to the curriculum following feedback the first graduating cohort of air force students.

The Assessment Committee welcomes the highly consultative approach to student feedback, but would advise a very carefully planned and structured approach to the number and timing of questionnaires, so as to avoid 'questionnaire fatigue'.

The Assessment Committee would commend the College's approach to ensuring that staff and students have extensive and accessible mechanisms for providing views and feedback on both academic and non-academic issues.

1.2 Personnel management	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development arise from the objectives of the development plan of a higher education institution, and ensure academic sustainability.</i> <i>When selecting, appointing and evaluating members of the academic staff, their past activities (teaching, RDC, student feedback, etc.) are taken into account in a balanced way.</i> <i>The principles of remuneration and motivation of employees are clearly defined, available to all employees, and implemented.</i> <i>Employee satisfaction with the management, working conditions, flow of information, etc., is regularly surveyed and the results used in improvement activities.</i> <i>Employees participate in international mobility programmes, cooperation projects, networks, etc.</i> <i>Employees base their activities on principles of academic ethics.</i></p>								
<p>Teaching staff at the College are appointed from two sources. Civilian teachers are recruited in open competition (application ratio 5:1) and are normally appointed on 5 year (renewable) contracts. Job application numbers are strong and staff are well qualified. Staff from the military services are appointed by decision of the EDF for periods ranging from 3 to 5 years. All staff reported that they have appropriate access to training in pedagogical skills both on first appointment and during their period of attachment. A number are supported to pursue further study such as Ph.D. The Committee recommends that the EDF, with ENDC, could with advantage review the career structure for military personnel, so as to provide incentive for those who wish to undertake a period of teaching or to develop a longer term career in teaching in ENDC and similar establishments, and to ensure a secure future supply of high-quality and well-motivated teaching staff. This would also allow a more structured and consistent approach to the training of teachers in pedagogical skills. The Assessment Committee recognized that the delivery of extended periods of individual staff mobility is difficult in the context of military personnel. Nevertheless the College has recognized the contribution which international mobility can make to the development of leadership capacity, and the Committee recommends that the College continues to support short-term staff attachments and placements (in both directions) with other appropriate organisations, so as to deliver the benefits of mobility.</p> <p>Communication between senior management and staff in the College is excellent. Staff at all levels felt able to voice their opinions in a supportive atmosphere. Staff satisfaction surveys are undertaken regularly and these indicate a very high level of satisfaction with</p>								

working conditions, levels of support and leadership at the College.

Expected standards of behavior and ethics for staff are well articulated and understood.

Overall, students were quite happy with the quality of their teachers, although they pointed out that some teaching methods and approaches are very traditional. They welcomed exposure to international teachers who could bring new experiences and different methods and approaches to teaching. The quality of teaching was confirmed overall as satisfactory by formal student feedback.

1.3 Management of financial resources and infrastructure	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:
The allocation of financial resources of a higher education institution as well as the administration and development of infrastructure are economically feasible, and are based on the objectives of the development plan of an institution of higher education and national priorities (except private institutions).
A higher education institution uses information systems that support its management and the coherent performance of its core processes.
The working conditions of the staff, and the learning and RDC conditions of students (library, studios, workshops, laboratories, etc.) meet the needs arising from the specifics of an institution of higher education and the expectations of members.

ENDC’s spending for 2012 amounted to €8.04m. Of this, some €6.72m is held and spent centrally through the EDF (e.g. for centralised military procurement and salaries) and some €1.32m is managed locally within ENDC to cover local operational costs. ENDC is required annually to submit a proposed plan of activity and a supporting budget plan to EDF and a budget is then allocated to ENDC to reflect approved activity. As part of this planning, the performance of existing academic programmes is reviewed annually and any resulting financial implications feed in to the annual budget planning exercise. The Assessment Committee noted that there are strong systems in place for budget management and accountability.

The Assessment Committee noted the high quality of resources available within ENDC. Teaching and study areas were well maintained

and well equipped. Library and IT support was very good and the Library's resources were soon to be enhanced through the setting up of a new integrated reference database. **The College is commended for the range, quality and high level of maintenance of its accommodation and facilities.**

ENDC supports the student body and their activities, providing them with the 'tools' to support student life. Dormitory facilities are very good and meet students' needs. Cadet students appreciated their social space and many different sporting facilities (for example - a shooting range), library and catering. They have the chance to participate in various extra-curricular activities, including for example gaining a driving license, ballroom dancing, etiquette and swimming courses and shadow teaching in secondary schools.

The Assessment Committee noted that through its very specialised role, ENDC has many 'high cost' features and activities which make it unique in Estonia and which makes comparisons with other higher education institutions difficult in respect of judgements on 'value for money'. The Assessment Committee would nevertheless urge ENDC **to continue its work on developing its own self-awareness by developing performance indicators which would allow it to assess its own relative performance and comparative value for money.**

2 TEACHING AND LEARNING
<p>The Assessment Committee found that overall the requirements for teaching and learning were met. Arrangements are in place for careful curriculum planning and review and programmes of study are responsive to employer needs. The relationship between teachers and students is very positive and teachers are very responsive to student feedback. There is a positive atmosphere for learning and students are well supported.</p> <p>Overall: conforms to requirements</p>

2.1 Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has defined its educational objectives and measures their implementation.</i> <i>A higher education institution educates students so they are nationally and internationally competitive.</i> <i>The number of student places is planned in accordance with the social need and the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education.</i> <i>The admission rules are consistent with the mission and purposes of an institution of higher education and support the formation of a motivated student body.</i> <i>Students are provided with opportunities to study at a higher education institution regardless of any special needs.</i></p>								
<p>The Estonian National Defence College has defined its educational objectives and measures their implementation. The development Plan of the ENDC for 2011-2015 and its Action Plan describe the objectives to be achieved and the activities to be carried out in order to meet those objectives The implementation of the Action Plan is reflected in the annual CHOD`s directive for subordinate units and the annual directives of the ENDC Commandant. A new National Defence Development plan for 2013-2022 has been approved and the</p>								

ENDC is now in the process of reviewing its own development plan in that context.

The national competitiveness of the College's graduates was confirmed during interviews with service representatives and in the discussions with graduates. Service representatives confirmed their satisfaction with the quality of graduates. They also welcomed an increasing emphasis on the development of practical leadership and administrative skills, so that graduates were fully prepared for deployment. Graduates during their interviews reported that they were prepared for service in their respective units. There is no formal procedure to measure international competitiveness of College graduates. However, very positive feedback from NATO and other partner nations, concerning the performance of Estonian officers and units during international operations served as an indirect indicator for the quality of education provided by the ENDC. One of the interviewed former graduates, currently a reserve officer working for an international company, explained that he highly valued his education from ENDC and that it helped him during his current civilian work.

The number of student places is planned by ENDC according to the actual needs of EDF and its subordinate services. Employment is therefore guaranteed for all graduates.

The admission rules for the ENDC are transparent and consistent with the mission and purpose of the ENDC. They are formulated according to specific requirements of the military service and described in 2 documents called 'Conditions and Procedures of Admission to the Estonian National Defence College' and 'Admission Criteria of the Estonian National Defence College'. The admission criteria are periodically reviewed and approved by the Council for a particular academic year. The Self-Evaluation Report indicated that admission requirements had been reviewed during recent academic years based on experience and student feedback; this was confirmed in discussions.

The nature of military service restricts the College's capacity to accept candidates with physical disabilities. In common with all Estonian higher education institutions, a fall in the birth rate will reduce the national pool of applicants for higher education in the next few years. ENDC is actively considering its own response to this challenge. Recent changes in Estonian legislation concerning conscript service will also open more opportunities for female candidates to apply to study in the ENDC. ENDC may consider this as an opportunity for the future. The Assessment Committee would recommend that **ENDC work with EDF to develop a pro-active strategy for promoting military careers for women and for increasing the number of female entrants to ENDC.**

2.2 Study programme development	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements:</p> <p><i>A higher education institution bases its new study programmes on its purposes and the needs of the labour market, and takes into account the strategies of the country and expectations of the society.</i></p> <p><i>Development activities related to study programmes are systematic and regular, and different stakeholders are involved in the development of study programmes.</i></p> <p><i>Graduate satisfaction with the quality of instruction and employer satisfaction with the quality and suitability to the requirements of the labor market of graduates are surveyed and analysed; the results are considered in the development of study programmes.</i></p>								
<p>The development of study programmes in ENDC is in line with requirements stated by EDF and the respective military services. The Self-Evaluation report describes very comprehensive curriculum compilation and curriculum improvement processes. The Assessment Committee clarified during interviews that reviews of existing study programmes take place on a regular basis. Programmes are carefully planned and monitored.</p> <p>The programme review process is systematic and takes into consideration inputs from all stakeholders including students, future employers and graduates. For example, recent experience in the development of the ‘Air Force Military Leadership’ programme confirmed that service experts had had an important role and input during the curriculum development process. There were also examples given of changes in subject teaching implemented as a result of student feedback. Student opinion is gathered in different ways, including regular discussions conducted at least once during the semester and students electronic feedback through the electronic learning support system.</p> <p>It was confirmed during the interviews that ENDC uses students’ feedback extensively to monitor the quality of the study process and the performance of teaching staff. Graduates also confirmed that they were consulted in order to find out their opinion concerning the quality of education provision and ways in which to improve it.</p> <p>The self-evaluation report describes ENDC’s intention to start teaching at least one subject in English. During the interviews it was unclear to the Assessment Committee whether the teaching of one subject in English would in fact actually be implemented. The Assessment Committee would however recommend that the teaching of one subject in English would give the opportunity for all</p>								

students (both Estonian and international) to prepare themselves better for operating in an international English – speaking military environment. The Assessment Committee **recommends that ENDC determine a timescale for implementing the teaching of a subject in English.**

From a student perspective, students see that their feedback is taken seriously and this promotes lasting improvements. The teaching methods of a small number of staff are sometimes less up to date than is wished and timetables can sometimes be too subject-concentrated at certain times. Students are very pleased with their practical training and think that this practice is comprehensive and prepares them for the future. Overall students believe that the curriculum gives them a very comprehensive understanding about both the military and civil society. Some employers think that graduates from ENDC have a very good knowledge of tactics and theory but sometimes lack full preparation in leadership and administrative skills; others say that these can only realistically be fully developed in the field.

2.3 Student academic progress and student assessment	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:
Student academic progress is monitored and supported.
Student assessment supports learning and is in line with learning outcomes.
A higher education institution has an effective system for taking account of prior learning and work experience.

The progression and academic performance of students is monitored and supported. The Self-Evaluation report shows that the number of drop-outs (at c. 10%) is not high in comparison with other higher educational institutions in Estonia. The assessment of students is done according to publicly available, pre-determined criteria and procedures.

Students confirmed that feedback from teachers on student work is prompt and efficient. Study and evaluation results can be appealed and the procedure for this is described in the document ‘Disputes Committee: Rules of Procedure’. It was confirmed during interviews that students are aware of their duties and rights and feel confident about them. Examples were given by students of the successful operation of the appeals system, in which they had confidence. Student representatives support and advise students who experience

difficulties with assessment and progress.

The Self-Evaluation Report describes a comprehensive formal procedure for supervising the preparation of student projects which has recently implemented at the ENDC. It ensures that students receive appropriate support and tutoring during the process. The SER also indicates that ENDC is investing in training to develop the supervisory skills of their teaching staff and that half of their teaching staff have taken part in the in-service course ‘Supervising Student Research Papers and Providing Feedback’.

The ENDC has an effective system in place for taking account of prior learning and work experience, which is in line with Bologna requirements. Figures in the SER show that the number of APEL applications increased in the period from 2010 to 2012. This is explained by changes in EDF regulations implemented in 2009, which now require evidence of higher education experience for all officers wishing to continue their service within EDF. It was confirmed during the interviews that the APEL system is working efficiently and is used extensively by EDF officers.

2.4 Support processes for learning	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:

- The organisation of studies creates an opportunity for students to complete their studies within the standard period.*
- A higher education institution provides students with counselling related to their studies and career.*
- A higher education institution supports student international mobility.*
- Modern technical and educational technology resources are used to organise educational activities.*
- Students are periodically asked for feedback on learning and support processes (the organisation of studies, assessment, counselling, etc.); the results of surveys are taken into account in improvement activities.*

The organisation of studies in the EDF clearly ensures for students the opportunity to complete their studies within the standard period. ENDC has a number of motivational schemes for encouraging student achievement (for example a trophy for the best student of the semester and opportunities for visiting good-will trips to foreign countries and schools.

The ENDC provides advice and counselling relating to studies, careers and personal life. Students know where to go if they have a problem or if they want to discuss something privately. Also they have amongst themselves a very good support system and they take very good care of each other. In regard to careers, the Committee was told that in many cases students receive information about

their future positions (postings) very late. It is understood by the Assessment Committee that the allocation of future positions is the responsibility of EDF. However the Assessment Committee **recommends to EDF via ENDC that students would benefit from knowing earlier in their study process about their future positions (postings).**

It was identified by the Assessment Committee that there are very few international mobility opportunities for students. The SER indicates the intention of the ENDC to initiate international agreements with three potential international partners. The meeting with the Commandant revealed that ENDC will be looking for opportunities to set up short exchange activities that would be in line with the curriculum structure in the College. The emphasis according the Commandant would be put on the development of stronger ties with other Baltic countries and Poland. The Assessment Committee would emphasise that mobility opportunities for students establish the climate for establishing a more open society, create opportunities for more talented students to further develop their knowledge, and ensure that graduates are better prepared to operate in an international environment. **The Committee recommends that the College should continue to plan creatively for the widespread exposure of staff and students to the international environment.**

The Assessment Committee recognises that the ENDC uses modern technical and educational technologies. Examples would be the recent adoption of a new SIS system, implementation of an e-learning platform, availability of a lecture recording system, and the availability of the JCATS (Joint Conflict and Tactical Simulation) system.

Student feedback systems are used extensively to evaluate the quality of the education process, the quality of teaching and administrative issues. Improvements to the SIS system were implemented as a result of students' feedback. All interviews confirmed that the feedback system is used systematically and results are analysed and appropriate actions taken.

3 RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND/OR OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITY (RDC)

General comments:

ENDC has a formal responsibility to develop research-based teaching and to undertake scientific research and development activities within the context of enhancing Estonian defence capability. All staff with a half-time contract or above are formally obliged to undertake research. This is currently executed by ENDC staff through participating in joint research projects with universities (through EU or other funded project work), through project work directly funded by the Estonian MoD, through participation in international networks and events, and through supervising student RDC activities. The publication entitled ‘ENDC Proceedings’ has been a convenient vehicle for research publications, with 16 published volumes in the period 2003-2012.

In the view of the Assessment Committee, the current strategy for research and development activities does not set clear enough objectives in RDC for ENDC. The College is aware that further strategic planning is necessary if it is to optimise its capacity for research activity. The Assessment Committee accepts that ENDC has performed reasonably well in this area of assessment, within the tight constraints of availability of resources and availability of research-active staff. The Committee agrees however with the College’s own assessment that a clear strategy and action plan is needed to address the research agenda and to fully satisfy this assessment criterion. A particular challenge is to increase the involvement of the military members of the teaching staff in ENDC’s research activity.

After careful consideration the Assessment Committee **recommends:**

- 1) The existing strategy for research and development activities should be articulated more clearly through the creation of an implementation plan that defines more selectively and precisely the key research areas on which research activity will be based and which sets out personnel policy, milestones and spending plans for its achievement**
- 2) Incentives for increased staff participation in research activity should be further articulated**

Overall: partially conforms to requirements

3.1 RDC effectiveness	conforms to requirements		partially conforms to requirements	X	does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:

A higher education institution has defined its RDC objectives and measures their implementation.

A higher education institution monitors the needs of society and the labour market, and considers them in planning its RDC activities.

In ENDC's strategy for research and development activities (approved 11/08/2013) the importance of the RDC sector has been acknowledged as an area that has to be improved during the planning period. The document starts from the principle that only personnel with research-based education and skills will guarantee a sustainable quality of higher military education for EDF.

To achieve this, **it is recommended firstly that personnel with only military backgrounds should be encouraged to develop the scientific skills necessary to enable them to carry out basic research activity.** Current recruiting and staff rotation systems do not support the building of institutional research capacity. A lack of qualified research staff causes the need to organize applied research only on temporary contracts and prevents ENDC from developing an embedded, long-term independent research programme. **Secondly, a longer term research plan should be articulated, with associated identified annual budgets.** In the SER these challenges are acknowledged.

The Assessment Committee recommends that the College clearly defines which activities fall under the RDC category and sets explicit objectives in the annual development plan correspondingly. The existing research networks and RD strategy provide a good starting point for the further development of applied research in ENDC.

3.2 RDC resources and support processes	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has an effective RDC support system.</i> <i>A higher education institution has financial resources needed for RDC development and a strategy that supports their acquisition.</i> <i>A higher education institution participates in different RDC networks.</i> <i>RDC infrastructure is being updated and used effectively.</i></p>								
<p>ENDC work collaboratively with a wide range of partners and networks in connection with RDC, both in Estonia and internationally.</p> <p>As a national institute, ENDC receives funding for research from EDF and MoD. Personnel and other indirect costs for RDC activities funded from these sources are not separately identified. Research activities are carried out alongside the other activities of the College, and are not separately costed. Thus, also the resources for supporting RDC activities are provided within the other activities of the College. As such the RDC support system (e.g. library services) is currently at a satisfactory level for the research that is carried out.</p> <p>ENDC also works collaboratively with a number of universities on specific grant-funded projects. These research projects are mainly funded by MoD but executed by universities. This collaboration gives access to financial support from EU funding and other sources.</p>								
3.3 Student research supervision	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution includes students of all academic cycles in research, creative or project activity; and systematically surveys student satisfaction with their supervision.</i> <i>Professionalism, effectiveness and the workload of supervisors are reasonably balanced, which ensures the quality of research papers</i></p>								

*and positive graduation rates.
Students are guided to recognize plagiarism and to avoid it.*

The Assessment Committee **commends ENDC for its supervision process for all students, in the preparation of student papers/projects.** It is planned and implemented extremely well. Students are able to get feedback during a process which ensures fair and professional consultation with supervisors - and decision making at the end of the process. ENDC also monitors students' satisfaction with the process. Students are provided with a list of possible final thesis topics and they can choose what they like best. Also they can choose their own topic as well as choosing their supervisor. The supervisor can also be chosen from outside ENDC or from a different university.

Students are satisfied with the supervisory process. Student paper topics are relevant to the areas of importance at the ENDC or in the EDF.

The students have also exceptionally good opportunities to get professional supervisors from the EDF units. Support from these networks helps to ensure that the quality of student research is relatively high.

During the student interviews the Assessment Committee heard that the students are aware of research ethics, including plagiarism and its consequences. It is evident that plagiarism and other forms of unethical behaviour are well controlled at ENDC. Rules on plagiarism are included in the College's Student Code of Ethics and they are aware of the procedures on dealing with violation of student academic integrity.

4 SERVICE TO SOCIETY
<p>General comments:</p> <p>The Assessment Committee found that all the necessary requirements were met in this area by the ENDC. There is a clear and visible system for promoting ENDC core activities through open-door events, active use of social media (Facebook), annual parades in Tartu and regular introductory visits to different schools all over the country. The Committee was very impressed by ENDC sharing its know-how on ‘War and disaster medicine’ as a part of the in-service training it provides.</p> <p>ENDC staff participate in a wide range of professional association activities within and outside of the MoD’s domain which brings insight and promotes the standing of ENDC.</p> <p>Overall: conforms to requirements</p>

4.1 Popularization of its activities and involvement in social development	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition
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Requirements:
*A higher education institution has a system for popularising its core activities.
 Employees of an institution of higher education participate in the activities of professional associations, and as experts, in other social supervisory boards and decision-making bodies.*

The ENDC has a clear and visible system to publicise its core activities using its corporate visual identity guidelines. Close cooperation with different agencies (e.g. Defence Resource Agency) and institutions (e.g. Tartu University, Tallinn University of Technology) has confirmed ENDC’s reputation as a reliable partner. Promoting national defence as a route into higher education has been very prominent over the recent years (through open-door events, reservists’ reunions, through numerous public events and regular introductory visits to schools). ENDC is actively introducing the concepts of national defence and higher education to Estonian secondary and vocational schools. Students are very involved in different activities which promote ENDC and the role of the military officer. They participate in numerous educational fairs. ENDC has open days for prospective candidates; they provide them with an opportunity to ‘shadow’ a cadet for a certain period of time.

Evidence was provided to demonstrate numerous examples of staff interaction with numerous organisations and interest groups.								
4.2 In-service training and other educational activities for the general public	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has defined the objectives regarding in-service training and measures their implementation. In-service training is planned in accordance with the needs of target groups as well as with the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education. Participant satisfaction with the quality of in-service training is regularly surveyed and the results are used in planning improvement activities.</i></p>								
<p>The Assessment Committee confirmed that in-service training is carried out within the principles of lifelong learning in accordance with the ENDC’s Development plan for 2011-2015. In-service training course provision is growing, as well as the total number of participants. The Assessment Committee welcomes the comprehensive approach that is used to identify the EDF’s detailed needs for in-service training. It commends the use of the e-learning environment to support in-service training as very good practice, with considerable further potential.</p> <p>Although ENDC’s core business is more oriented towards the needs of EDF, the Assessment Committee was impressed by and commends in-service training provided to other organisations outside MoD’s domain, such as the ‘War and Disaster Medicine’ training programme, delivered to Tartu University’s medical students.</p>								
4.3 Other public-oriented activities	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>Public-oriented activities are purposeful, the results of the activities are periodically evaluated, and improvements are introduced</i></p>								

based on those evaluations.

A higher education institution contributes to the enhancement of community welfare by sharing its resources (library, museums, sports facilities, etc.) and/or by organising concerts, exhibitions, performances, conferences, fairs and other events.

The Assessment Committee found that ENDC is very active and systematic with public-oriented activities. Activities to preserve traditions are visible to society and well accepted by it with positive media coverage; at least 10 positive examples were noted. Sharing its resources is a good example of the institution's connectivity with the local society. Having an ENDC museum with a steady number of visitors each year is a positive indicator of ENDC's visibility. ENDC's substantial library is freely accessible to the public. The simulation centre is also a valuable resource which is made available to relevant outside groups.