

Assessment Report

Study Programme Group of
Languages and Cultures

Euroacademy

Tallinn University

University of Tartu



Contents

Introduction	3
Summary of Study Programme Group Findings	4
Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations	7
1. Assessment Report of SPG at Euroacademy	9
1.1. Some characteristics of Euroacademy	9
1.2. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations.....	9
1.3. Strengths and Areas for Improvement of the Study Programme by Assessment Areas.....	10
1.3.1 Translation (Prof HE).....	10
2. Assessment Report of SPG at Tallinn University	17
2.1. Some characteristics of Tallinn University	17
2.2. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations.....	18
2.3. Strengths and Areas for Improvement of Study Programmes by Assessment Areas	19
2.3.1. English Language and Culture (BA); German Language and Culture (BA); Romance Languages and Cultures (BA)	19
2.3.2. Translation (MA); Conference Interpreting (MA)	30
2.3.3. Asian Studies (BA, MA)	34
2.3.4. Russian Philology (BA); Slavonic Languages and Cultures (MA).....	42
2.3.5. Estonian Philology (BA); Estonian as a second language and Estonian Culture (BA); Finnish Philology (BA)	50
3. Assessment report of SPG at the University of Tartu	56
3.1. Some characteristics of the University of Tartu.....	56
3.2. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations.....	57
3.3. Strengths and Areas for Improvement of Study Programmes by Assessment Areas	58
3.3.1. English, German, Roman and Classical Languages and Cultures (BA, MA)	58
3.3.2 Russian and Slavic Languages and Literatures (BA); Slavic Studies (MA).....	67
3.3.3 Translation Studies (MA)	76
3.3.4. Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics (BA, MA)	80
3.3.5. Literature and Cultural Research (BA); Literature and Theatre Research (MA)	85

Introduction

The aim of the assessment team was the evaluation of the study programme group of Languages and Cultures in three higher education institutions: Euroacademy, Tallinn University, and the University of Tartu.

The team was asked to assess the conformity of the study programmes belonging to the study programme group and the instruction provided on the basis thereof to legislation and to national and international standards and/or recommendations, including the assessment of the level of the corresponding theoretical and practical instruction, the research and pedagogical qualification of the teaching staff and research staff, and the sufficiency of resources for the provision of instruction.

The following persons formed the assessment team:

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After the preparation phase, the work of the assessment team in Estonia started on Sunday, October 4, 2015, with an introduction to the Higher Education System as well as the assessment procedure by EKKA, the Estonian Quality assurance organization for higher and vocational education. The members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group at the three institutions, which were part of the assessment process. The distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment team was organised and the detailed schedule of the site visits agreed.

During the following days, meetings were held with the representatives of Tallinn University (Monday the 5th and Tuesday the 6th), Euroacademy (Tuesday the 6th), and the University of Tartu (Wednesday the 7th and Thursday the 8th). In all cases, the schedule for discussion on site for each of the various study programmes only allowed for short time slots to be available for team members to exchange information, discuss conclusions and implications for further questions.

On Friday, October 9, the team held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report was agreed and findings of team meetings were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report. This work was executed in a cooperative way and the members of the team intensively discussed their individual views on the relevant topics.

Summary of Study Programme Group Findings

At the time of the visit to the universities the areas under study were going through a process of restructuring, with a new configuration and new leadership. The team found a variety of situations: language areas that were strong and buoyant, in particular Estonian, English and Russian, and areas that were smaller and consequently more fragile, for example, the Romance languages, German, Classical Philology. It may be that such areas need particular attention: does there need to be national policy of support for these small areas? Should there be an attempt to rationalise provision in order that they survive with a certain strength? There are risks to quality when universities try to cover the entire curriculum with a very limited number of staff. The team recognises, of course, that this represents a particular challenge for a country with a relatively small population. Staff stretch themselves too widely, they seek to cover all areas, research intensity is lost and research-led teaching ceases to be a feature of the university, with a consequent fall in reputation. It may be the case that universities will need to consider whether they have the resources to offer a full degree or a major in a particular language area. It is hard to believe that a full degree can be offered where the staff members are so few in number. Clearly, this puts particular pressure on institutions. There need to be certain protected areas where numbers will always be small; this might be the case, for example, for the training of interpreters. There is little point in training people who will have no job prospects but it is important to train those that are needed, even if, financially, this might seem to make little sense to university managers and their finance offices.

The team formed the view that the universities should adopt a strategy that would emphasise the value and need of languages. Not only does the national need have to be stressed but it is also important that there is a rich and sufficient provision of linguists for a variety of employment needs, and of course for the cultural richness that a language degree offers to individuals and to groups. The public at large and even the public within universities do not always fully comprehend what a language degree actually involves:

proficiency in the language, of course, but also knowledge of the history and culture of the country or countries where the language is spoken. Such knowledge is essential when visiting a particular country as an ambassador at any level. The websites of the institutions we visited sometimes lack hard information about the structure and content of courses, include also information that is out of date and should be removed. Applicants and indeed competitors now look at institutional websites - they need to be cleaned up occasionally, modernised, kept up to date with attractive images. If a university is going to include photos of its staff it should make sure at least that they are all the right way up, which we found was not always the case.

The team was surprised to learn that in many areas there were still significant numbers of students not completing their studies. While the team understood the various reasons for this, it was surprised that there seemed to be no formal policy on the retention of students, no targets set, more a tacit willingness to accept the status quo. The team was surprised to learn that significant numbers of students failed to complete their degrees as the final thesis was a major stumbling block. There have to be ways sought to reduce the numbers of such students. Is the final thesis so important? Is the degree valued so little? It is of course possible that students like to retain their status as students as they can benefit in that way from various forms of reduction in society. In Finland, where the same problem existed, students were defined with an age limit. There is good practice in some of the areas we saw; is it not possible to spread the good practice in certain areas where students are gradually taken through the process of thesis writing so that they are well prepared for it? There are examples of good practice, for example, in Tallinn University (in particular Estonian and Russian programmes). Perhaps that good practice could be better spread throughout the universities and not simply in the language areas. It may be that at the moment working and earning money is possible without a formal degree, but in years to come that may change and the possession of an actual certificate will be essential in the national and international job market.

The team found many examples of good practice in the institutions it visited. What it did not see was any real process of ensuring that good practice was being spread across the institution, not just in the language areas but across all cognate areas. This may be because we found no formal process of peer review where teachers would learn from each other, and no regular form of staff appraisal where staff could identify training needs. There seems to be no formal policy of staff development that would encourage teachers to improve their skills and develop new ones. If staff development were to form an integral part of the contract, this might not be an issue. The team saw no evidence of training provision for colleagues in leadership positions, no evidence of training individuals for future important roles. The apparent lack of training provision might explain an apparent reluctance to engage in online provision of courses. Practice seemed to vary from colleague to colleague and there appeared to be no expected minimal standards set by the institutions. Online courses could be used to supplement provision of fragile areas, video conferencing across

institutions might allow certain lecture courses to take place that would otherwise not be available in a particular location at a particular time

The team learned that the institutions had various forms of curriculum committees looking at the curriculum, including staff, students, and external stakeholders. What it did not see was a clear programme review process in which colleagues from other departments in the institution, with a member external to the institution, meeting, say, every five years and considering whether the programme was fit for purpose, whether the learning outcomes were being achieved, whether any improvements might be considered. The European standards expect this kind of review, and the creation of a panel external to the department in question adds extra authority to the conclusions. The panel would talk to staff and students, make a site visit, talk to alumni and consider resources and any other issues and make recommendations.

Students of a foreign language generally gain proficiency from a period of study in a particular country. Clearly, when the students are international students who are studying in Estonia, this is not an issue, but when Estonian students leave the country for a semester or a year to study elsewhere, it is important that such studies are formally recognised and that students are not obliged to extend the length of their studies in order to qualify. This is a matter that must be addressed at university level.

Estonia offers a rare possibility to students to study Russian in an area within the EU where Russian is in some areas the native language. There are high quality programmes in Russian, and there is an international demand for Russian speakers, interpreters, and specialists. There is great potential here and more active promotion could be made of this opportunity to attract international students.

The team felt that there could be more imaginative provision of assessment practices and also more done to ensure the security of assessment. Courses taught by one person and then assessed by the same person can be risky when the students do not submit work anonymously. The team felt that there should at least be clear processes established whereby assessment was at least moderated by another member of staff. There should also be clear processes for appeals against particular marks and also clarity about any penalties for late submission, rather than rely on the goodwill of individual teachers. It is essential that all students know the rules and that they are applied evenly throughout the institution.

The team was impressed by the high standard of English of the staff and students that it met during the visits. Almost without exception, the dialogue could take place without repetition and without the need for long explanations.

With particular reference to Interpreting and Translation programmes:

- There is a need of a national translation training policy to avoid overlapping completion and waste of resources. Distinguished profiles (with clear specialisations) could be drafted if the programmes remain in Euroacademy, Tallinn University and the University of Tartu. A stronger definition of professional training could be given.
- More emphasis should be put on what will happen after 2018: programmes in interpreting might not survive.
- There is no programme from Estonia belonging to the EMT/European Masters' in Translation (A network of 74 programmes in the EU State members, of which three programmes are from Latvia and one from Lithuania. We shall underline that the country's size is not relevant in the selection process of EMT.).
- Consider ways of ensuring that during interpretation classes students are monitored carefully to ensure accuracy and correctness. What we have seen while visiting a class of simultaneous interpreting (2 teachers for 5 students) showed that students were carefully monitored. At least, teachers were following a common good practice in Europe. A teacher never sticks to one student's performance. That could be inhibiting. We noticed the same in Tartu (during a class in consecutive, with one teacher and 2 students). In fact, the young teachers have been educated within the same didactic framework elaborated by the EU institutions and the EMCI network (European Masters in conference interpreting).

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

- Develop a national strategy for languages, to educate the nation about the importance of language provision.
- Develop formal policies for the retention of students.
- Seek ways to spread good practice across the institution.
- Consider ways of developing online provision.
- Formalise the process of staff training and development.
- Ensure that student mobility does not oblige students to extend the length of their studies.
- Introduce a formal periodic programme review process across the institution.

- Seek to ensure greater security of assessment procedures.

1. Assessment Report of SPG at Euroacademy

Study programme group	<i>Languages and Cultures</i>
Higher education institution	Euroacademy
Study programmes	Translation (Prof HE)

1.1. Some characteristics of Euroacademy

EUROACADEMY (known as EuroUniversity until 2009) was established in 1997 as a private higher educational establishment. In 1999, NPO *Eesti Euroinfo Ühing* became the keeper of Euroacademy (EuroUniversity) due to the amendments of legislation. In 2011, EuroUniversity lost its university status due to the closure of the curriculum of Doctoral studies. The number of students who have graduated from Euroacademy (resp. EuroUniversity) comprises 2051. As of 1 May 2015, 586 students were engaged in studies at Euroacademy (hereinafter EA).

Since its establishment, EA provides instruction in five faculties: the Faculty of International Relations (59 students), the Faculty of Translation (55 students), the Faculty of Business Management (272 students), the Faculty of Environmental Protection (69 students), and the Faculty of Design (131 students) (*data as of 1 May 2015*). The Faculty of Translation has 44 students.

During the academic year of 2013/2014, the right to provide instruction was granted to 6 study programmes of professional higher education and 2 curricula of Master's studies, while instruction is also provided in Russian in 6 programmes of professional higher education and 2 Master's programmes. In spring 2015, the right to provide instruction in English was granted to 3 programmes of professional higher education and 2 programmes of Master's studies. At the time of the visit EA had 21 functioning study programmes. There are no Master degree studies provided in the area of languages and cultures.

1.2. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

- Increase international cooperation for staff and students. Encourage more student mobility.

- Provide more opportunities for staff development in order to keep up to date with teaching methods, some of which are clearly outdated.
- Clarify the assessment procedures and the criteria that are being used.

1.3. Strengths and Areas for Improvement of the Study Programme by Assessment Areas

1.3.1 Translation (Prof HE)

Study programme and study programme development

The changes in the curriculum follow certain procedures (through the Senate and the Management Board). Because of the small size of the institution and the faculty of translation, those changes seem easy to propose and implement. The institution has total freedom in relation to the curriculum, the content of which can be changed by staff, taking suggestions from students, the professional unions and translation agencies.

Strengths

- The 8 students we met were positive about the study programme and strongly believed that their studies were useful and relevant for the labour market and they let the team know they would recommend this programme to others.
- Studying takes place in small groups, which makes it possible to take individual students' needs into account.
- There is a close relationship between the EA and its students during and even after their studies. The team felt the institution cares about the students and its graduates. If students who are not from Tallinn do not attend the classes, they will be called and asked about what happened. The team was told the graduates tell the EA about any changes in jobs. The rector has also expressed his openness to any suggestions and recommendations provided by students.

Areas for improvement

- There have been changes in the programme in the last few years (in 2011, 2014 2015), but there is no clear information about the skills developed in students that attend, for instance, the module on entrepreneurship (set up in 2011).

- The rationale for the changes is not clear. Obviously, a major part of them are consequences of the change in status of the EA from a university into a professional higher education institution. Apart from that, it was not apparent that they were made on the basis of labour market needs but made on personal opinions of the teachers. Nevertheless, it was mentioned that the course Estonian-Russian (translation) was introduced subsequent to interviewing companies, the Estonian Association of Translation Agencies and the students.
- The Faculty of Translation has a coordinator. The central administration has one person responsible for HR and the other in charge of Erasmus programmes. The Faculty has established co-operation agreements with other universities, from Latvia, Poland, Turkey but only one seems to be in translation training (according to the information that was received during the visit). The students experienced lack of opportunities for exchange periods in English-speaking universities. Thus, the institution is not very active in national and international cooperation in terms of promoting mobility.
- The internship has been developed from 10 to 27 ECTS but is organised in a fragmented way (2 ECTS as “observation” during the first term + 5 ECTS x 5 terms). The agreements that have been signed with some translation agencies are not covering the actual needs for internship. Internship should represent at least 15% of the workload in professional HE (outside the classroom). EA has offered opportunities for carrying out internships abroad, but not for students in translation.
- Electronic tools are available but they should be used more in training.

Recommendations

- While we commend the positive relationship between the staff and the students, we would nevertheless recommend less asymmetric relationships, with no domination on the side of the teaching staff (setting up learning items to be discussed, personal problems to be solved, activities to be organized).
- More explicit coordination is needed between the different stakeholders (teachers, students, employers, supervisors of internship, advisers in the administration).
- More involvement is needed from the programme coordinator to make the mobility, including the internships more attractive and to seek new cooperation opportunities for students in Translation. Also, more cooperation between the HR and programme coordinator would be beneficial.
- The institution needs to increase its co-operation with other universities and institutions, both in Estonia and abroad. This is important in order to keep the

scientific substance and methodology of both teaching and translation up to date.

- More in-depth coordination is needed for the internship: a representative of the training programme, the supervisor of the internship from the industry or the translation agency should be able to define together the requirements, the objectives and the evaluation criteria of the internship, and the content of the final report.
- Additionally, more opportunities should be offered to students to run their internship abroad.

Resources

The team noted that the premises have been built for offices, not for educational purposes.

Area for improvement

- The Library is poor: it is stocked mostly with dictionaries, does not have any relevant monographs and journals in Translation studies. It is not efficiently used (indeed, students seem to be either unaware of it or reluctant to use it; they stated that there are better libraries downtown if they need one, notably the Tallinn University library).

Recommendations

- Obviously, resources must be adapted to the needs of translators, e.g., for team work, project management, access to the internet for information mining, etc.. In the two classes visited by the team there were no computers or laptops, although the institution claims that there is a computer class specifically designed for students of translation, seating twelve students and equipped with translation software. It further claims that it has 19 recently updated translation software licences (SDL Trados Studio 2014), which are used by students during the classes where they are taught CAT tools, and that it has been offered students' licences for the students' personal laptops as well, so that they can also practise the programme at home.
- The students will be exposed to the usage of modern technologies in the computer room that could be adjusted, so that it looks more user-friendly and the EA could organise video lectures with professors from other domestic and international universities.
- It is recommended to increase awareness of students of the library, to provide them with access to databases, including from home and to invest more in the

library in terms of books and journals, along with online journals which represent a valuable information for the future interpreters and translators.

Teaching and learning

The supervisors for theses are appointed, while students have the freedom to choose the topics to be approached. The theses consist of commented translations based on the text selected by the students (a 10-page linguistic analysis). It is difficult to see the contribution of those theses to both the student's competences in translation and the student's theoretical skills. However, students have mentioned that theses were relevant and beneficial for the area of their activity.

Plagiarism is not an issue (no students seem to copy anything from the Net). Students said that they have been warned about plagiarism but that little more seemed to be done with respect to it.

Translation is still considered more as a linguistic issue than an intercultural matter.

Strengths

- Students can work from Russian into Estonian and reverse. Russian is the language of the neighbouring country, an international language in need in international organisations and in the European institutions. In many European countries, there is a lack today of translators with Russian as one of their working languages.

Areas for improvement

- Some courses (Technical Texts, Written Translation from English) do not provide a clear understanding about the skills they are developing.
- Some courses (Translation of Technical Texts, Translation Theory, Computer-Assisted Translation, Written Translation into English) are numbered I and II: The progression from one to the other is unclear.
- In some syllabuses in translation, the references are provided only in Estonian.
- The assessment procedures and criteria are not defined in relation to competences to be acquired and learning outcomes which are still to be defined
- There are no online courses and the Moodle platform is not used.

- The teaching methods are traditional (strongly teacher-centered) and rather outdated. They need to be in line with recent developments. More focus is needed on teaching methods, since some students were not knowledgeable of the teaching strategies used during the courses; also, the teaching staff should be provided with continuous education opportunities to update their skills and strategies.

Recommendations

- Increase the number of international partnerships and give formal recognition to studies conducted abroad (not recognised today in the credits of a student)
- Improve and increase the coordination between teachers, especially in defining the goals and learning outcomes (missing today in the description of the courses)
- Bring teaching methods in line with recent developments.
- The teaching staff should be provided with continuous education opportunities to update their skills and strategies, taking into account that this was a requirement voiced by the teaching staff.

Teaching staff

Strength

- The ratio of teaching staff to students is positive and generous – 11 teaching staff/44 students. It was pointed that one of the advantages is the presence of a qualified teaching staff that is involved into both training and translation. Three lecturers of the faculty are the EA former students.

Areas for improvement

- Management should create a more coherent and dynamic team of teachers that conducts regular meetings on topics such as further education, promotion of research, national and international cooperation, planning sustainable development.
- The mobility of teaching staff is very low. When meeting the teaching staff, the team has learnt that some of their members went to Riga and Moscow for trainings and they had been supported with funding. However, no figures were provided. Teaching staff is predominantly recruited among graduates of the EA, with no open competition or applicants from outside the EA.

- There is a need to bring in more international teaching staff to give breadth and experience to the programme. Foreign/visiting teachers could be invited, bringing with them new issues, new teaching methods. Or virtual courses could be organised with the involvement of foreign lecturers.

Recommendations

- There should be a more open competition in order to allow the employment of teaching staff from outside the institution and from abroad.
- There should be more opportunities for the staff for self-development and to update the knowledge in the use of technologies.
- More international teaching staff should be invited and involved in the programme.
- Continuous education should be provided for teachers at home and abroad. The EA shall support financially all the trainings abroad.
- The teaching staff is not actively involved in research activities. The publication record of the staff members is low and publications are mostly made for course materials and the internal journal – *Baltic Horizons*). Staff should be encouraged to publish in journals managed by institutions other than their own and to attend conferences in the area of their interest.

Students

Strengths

- Use of social media for the promotion of the programme.
- Small size of the institution (easy personal contacts).

Area for improvement

- English is the main language of the studies but the students have very few opportunities for exchange periods in English-speaking countries.
- There is no unit responsible for students seeking psychological counselling. Currently, the communication and counselling is provided by the Translation Faculty Coordinator.
- There is no evident use of alumni for providing a link from the EA to the labour market or to potential new students.

Recommendations

- There is a need to establish a unit responsible for students psychological counselling. EA should announce the students about the counselling services when they are created and encourage them to make use of such services.
- Additionally, there is a need to provide study consultations or career guidance for students (e.g. Advising Bureau).
- The Association of Alumni should be set up (in parallel or in coordination with the existing Association of Master's Translators and Interpreters).
- Alumni should be used for the spread of the word about the programme.
- There should be a broader view on translation practices in marketing materials (translation should include new practices such as localization, trans-editing, transcreation)
- Erasmus agreements with higher education institutions in English-speaking should be made where possible.

2. Assessment Report of SPG at Tallinn University

Study programme group	<i>Languages and Cultures</i>
Higher education institution	Tallinn University
Study programmes	English Language and Culture (BA) German Language and Culture (BA) Romance Languages and Cultures (BA) Russian Philology (BA) Slavonic Languages and Cultures (MA) Estonian Philology (BA) Estonian as a second language and Estonian Culture (BA) Finnish Philology (BA) Asian Studies (BA, MA) Translation (MA) Conference Interpreting (MA)

2.1. Some characteristics of Tallinn University

Tallinn University is a public university, still relatively young, formed of the merger some 10 years ago between the pedagogical university and other institutes. At the time of the visit the university was in the midst of further major changes and was attempting to bring together diverse small groups of disciplines into larger units. The desire is to increase the possibility of interdisciplinarity in the university, forming in practice a Faculty of Humanities that will deliver American-style degrees in liberal arts. The team recognised the challenges ahead but was concerned that many staff members with whom it met did not seem to have a clear idea of what the future held for them and there was evident anxiety about the prospects for their disciplines, especially when they were small and vulnerable.

There is a new development plan in the university (*Promoting Intelligent Lifestyle, Development Plan 2015-2020*) which seeks to develop five areas:

1. Educational innovation
2. Digital and Media Culture
3. Cultural Competences

4. Healthy and Sustainable Lifestyle

5. Society and Open Governance

Languages and culture clearly have a role to play in this plan, but there is always a risk, when areas of activity are small, that their content is diluted and the degree ceases to function as the degree for which it was originally planned. There is an expectation that the study of a foreign language will bring with it linguistic proficiency and also cultural awareness and knowledge. Spreading the curriculum might not always achieve this.

2.2. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

The team found high levels of student satisfaction with no critical comments on the language provision and no criticism relating to resources. Teaching rooms, equipment and library provision were all deemed to be satisfactory. However, the team found some students who clearly felt that they had not been adequately prepared for the final thesis.

There seemed to be no clear policy on the retention of students and the nature of student advising was variable. There seemed to be very little provision of career advising, certainly not in keeping with the size of the student population.

Staff were concerned about the uncertainty of their contractual status, the poor level of salaries with little or no increase over a period of years. Workloads in languages were seen on occasion to be unacceptably high. There was insufficient resource for conference participation.

There appeared to be little or no provision for staff development, no formal system of staff appraisals. There seemed to be no formal process across the languages or across the university for the sharing of good practice.

The team concluded that there had been little or no consultation about the new structures and the new curriculum that was being introduced from September 2016. Staff seemed unaware of the changes that were coming. The team recognised the value of interdisciplinarity and recognised also the value of an American style liberal arts degree, but it saw dangers in the dilution of the curriculum to the extent that the purity and depth of a language degree were compromised. We believe strongly that a language degree should involve proficiency and cultural awareness in the language. It is quite clear that in the area of modern languages the university is moving away from its traditional degree structure towards an American style liberal arts programme. This will have its value, without doubt, but there may in consequence be a diminution of the language elements in degrees purporting to be degrees in modern languages. To what extent is the national need being addressed? Students will need to be advised about course content and structure.

The team recognised that certain areas were small and fragile, yet clearly of value. It felt that more could be done to emphasise the value of a degree in languages.

The team saw no evidence of a university policy on the availability of electronic resources - students commented critically on the variability of Moodle provision.

The team had reservations about the security of assessment procedures whereby a course would be established and assessed by a single person, without any form of moderation and without the safety of anonymity.

The team saw no evidence of a formal internal review process of programmes, and would recommend that the university considers this as a means of ensuring the currency and strength of programmes.

2.3. Strengths and Areas for Improvement of Study Programmes by Assessment Areas

2.3.1. English Language and Culture (BA); German Language and Culture (BA); Romance Languages and Cultures (BA)

The BA programme in English Language and Culture is consistent with comparable first-cycle programmes in European tertiary education. It aims to provide a broad-based familiarity with the cultures of the Anglophone world whilst simultaneously building competence in a student's English language fluency and articulacy. This dual focus intends therefore to pursue two general lines of pedagogical approach, that of linguistic skill-building and that of cultural and literary familiarization.

English programmes in Estonia are fortunate in that they may often presume that incoming students will have some basic familiarity and competence with the target language of their instruction. This offers a useful opportunity to develop specific linguistic abilities for students who might be interested in such 'niche' learning opportunities, often referred to as English for Specific Purposes. It is the understanding of this team that the English department at the Tallinn University already undertakes these types of courses, and it is to encourage this type of offering that notice is taken here of the opportunity already-skilled entry-level students can provide the institution.

It is unclear to the team how well the English programme promotes itself. The team has little doubt that the programme itself is well-structured and effective, but it remains unclear what strategy for attracting the very best students the programme pursues. In this sense, the English programme has a happy dilemma; it is likely that the programme will continue to

be popular, given the ongoing prominence of English as a world language, yet it is unclear how the department intends to select and prioritize the best applicants in future years. A clear recruitment strategy that is programme-specific would be a useful document to generate, as it would assist both in recruitment of the most promising undergraduates as well as indicate areas for future curriculum development.

The German Language and Culture BA programme again is consistent with the basic requirements of similar programmes in the European higher education constellation. There is, however, a significant distinction between the German and English programmes, and that is simply in the public perception of the utility of English. It is hardly the fault of the German programme staff that English has asserted a growing linguistic influence on the world, yet it would be tragic if an area with such strong ties to Germanic-language culture would permit that area to fall into scholarly abeyance.

The German programme has a good curriculum and strong staff. It is their challenge to assure the continuing sustainability of student enrolment, as well as to assist staff development as teachers and researchers. In this they should pursue carefully opportunities to engage the diplomatic and ambassadorial outreach programmes of the German and Austrian embassies, but more importantly also engage German universities and the Goethe Institute as closely as possible. In a world in which English is already widely spoken by incoming students, there is a strong argument to be made that mastering German professionally will distinguish a student far beyond merely advancing one's already good English, as students in the English language programme are likely to do.

The Romance Languages and Cultures—Italian, Spanish, and French—face different challenges than do the English and German programmes. It would appear that the primary challenge facing the Romance Languages is essentially survival. It is not certain that these programmes, given their size in terms of both recruitment and staffing, are sustainable. This would be a serious loss to the Humanities in Tallinn University and would surely be considered undesirable by the broad generality of the Tallinn University language staff. Yet it must be acknowledged that the Romance Languages face an existential crisis in Tallinn University, and it would be desirable for the programme leaders to take all reasonable steps to assure a consistency of enrolment and support for these programmes. Would it be too much to suggest that the universities work together to address national needs and requirements? Language degrees might survive more strongly if they form part of a combined degree with, for example, law, business studies, politics, and international relations.

Study programme and study programme development

As stated in the Self-Evaluation Report, the curricula for these programmes are regularly considered for improvement and weaknesses, and a Programme Council debates and

approves the current curriculum. It is appropriate to see that this body includes representatives of current students, alumni, and external stakeholders (social partners). It is not clear to the team, however, how much autonomy this body may have to resist larger initiatives from executive management that may be inappropriate for these specific programmes.

The curricula for these programmes are consistent with international standards. A significant number of core (or mandatory) courses are designed to guarantee a basis of subject-specific abilities and knowledge expected of graduates of first-cycle English or German programmes. These mandatory courses seem properly structured and would, for a student, likely result in a resourceful graduate well-positioned to use English or German in the employment market. Indeed, this seems problematic: it is perhaps a mark of success that there is a drop-off of students continuing on from 1st to 2nd cycle degrees within these programmes.

Electives are a different concern; it appears that this may be more applicable to the English programme than to the German. Yet as emerged during the discussion the teaching representatives had with the team, there is some concern amongst staff that upcoming changes may reduce the scope or number of elective offerings. It is the suggestion of this team that such constrictions be resisted, as it appears to be a strength of the Tallinn University English programme that it offers diverse and broadly-ranging elective opportunities for the students, enabling those students to tailor their own learning experiences to their personal interests.

The curriculum and structure of the German programme do not have any obviously glaring errors or gaps. Yet it would be perhaps useful to see a greater readiness to engage in very specific regional and cultural (and historical) connections to Germanic language and cultural heritages in Estonia (or the Baltic region generally). This would be of interest to Estonian students, would give regional students an advantage that students elsewhere might not possess, and would perhaps attract incoming mobility students from programmes in other countries. There is an extensive and substantive connection between the Baltic and the Germanic cultures, and it is a source for potential development to emphasize those linkages.

If there is a curricular weakness to be addressed in the medium to long term, for the English programme, it likely lies in the continuing general focus upon British and North American culture. This is certainly historically justified; yet English is now a world language in a way that has historical precedents perhaps only in Latin. It certainly is spoken, written and read by vastly more non-native speakers than native speakers. It would be the suggestion of this team that the members of the English department consider developing electives and research opportunities that more greatly incorporate non-native English and the concepts of World Englishes (multiple Englishes; world-English etymology; grammatical and idiomatic variation; etc.).

The Romance Languages appear to offer a competitive and thoughtful programme that is appropriate to the linguistic level of their students. The courses described to the team, and the relevant sections in the Self-Evaluation Report, both indicate that the programme staff have given serious reflective thought to the academic offerings provided to their undergraduates.

Unlike English and, to a certain extent, German, the Romance Languages cannot presume that their student recruits will already have solid linguistic competence in their target language. This may place additional pressure upon the Romance Languages as an academic offering. If already small programmes must divide themselves to accommodate both students with strong Italian or French, and those who wish to begin studying the language in their first year of instruction, this will require additional teaching time and perhaps the institutional tolerance of smaller groups.

Strengths

- The curricula are currently comparable to similar tertiary programmes in English and German offered by institutions in the European region.
- The balance of courses between language skills/cultural development is well-structured.
- The variety and depth of elective offerings in the English programme are a source of curricular strength, and ought to be protected against contraction when possible.
- Students appear to have strong language skills in English when they arrive, allowing for the potential development of extremely strong 'specific purpose' language courses.

Areas for improvement

- The programme focus for English still seems strongly upon British and North American cultural and linguistic models. It would be desirable to see this expanded to include regional Englishes (Indian, Pakistani, South African, Caribbean, Irish, etc.), as well as the exploding field of non-native Englishes.
- In a similar area, World Englishes offer fruitful areas of study that are not clearly fully addressed in the current English curriculum. One can offer linguistic studies of English as a world language; cultural studies about the desirability (or lack thereof) of having English as a world language; anthropological studies of the applicability of English to different cultures, and other similar offerings as befit the expertise and interests of the teaching staff and the students.

- German offerings appear to focus primarily upon the German/Austrian historical axis, which tends to underemphasize the full exploitability of the extensive Estonian and Baltic connection with Germanic culture.

Recommendations

- Maintain the curricular balance between skills-building courses (ability to use the English language) and cultural (historical, literary, aesthetic, etc.) offerings to balance the student educational experience.
- Encourage and protect the offering of diverse and broad-based elective courses. Concomitantly, resist thinking of elective offerings as being the most easily eliminatable courses in difficult scheduling circumstances, as often these electives are the most interesting and inventive.
- Pursue opportunities to broaden the study of English from British/North American centrality, and deepen the offerings in the fields of Regional Englishes and English as a World Language.
- Where possible, promote in-depth 'English for Specific Purposes' specialty courses appropriate for the level and interests of the students, to engage their already accomplished language skills.
- Where possible, develop elective courses or modules specific to the Estonian/Baltic cultural connection to Germanic languages and cultures, and attempt to expand these offerings to 1) diversify the current academic offering, and 2) attract incoming mobility.
- Romance Languages should institute course costing models that will establish how many students constitute a minimum for the valid running of programmes for 1) students with some established linguistic competence in the target language, and 2) students who wish to begin their language study in the target language at university.

Resources

The resources available to the English and German programmes are adequate to the intended courses and learning. The classrooms that were shown to the team were appropriate to the programme, and the materials were sufficient for proper learning and the conduct of a modern course. The facilities are favourable for learning and teaching. Course sizes seem, on the whole, maintained at a reasonable teaching level.

English has the pleasant circumstance of being among the best-positioned language programmes within the University. As it is a world language, it is likely to continue attracting students, and to continue to attract funding as appropriate. Yet it would be remiss not to

note that there is genuine anxiety within the academic staff of the English programme about the intellectual freedom that they may or may not be able to exercise given the financial and structural challenges the current period places before Tallinn University. There is a general consensus amongst those with whom the team spoke that elective offerings would be diminished for purely monetary considerations; and there is also a concern (common to most academics in Europe) that the diversification of subscription databases will make individual research ever more fragmented and costly. In this, the suggestions of the instructors—permit multiple elective offerings and make database subscription a top research priority—seem reasonable and appropriate for maintaining and developing this programme.

German faces a different situation. Despite being one of the major diplomatic, commercial and scientific languages in Europe—and setting aside the astonishing achievements of German literature and philosophy—it can sometimes seem a ‘poor cousin’ of English programmes. Here it would be desirable to promote the much-easier mobility opportunities to German-speaking countries than to the U.K. or the U.S.A.; to attract the support and assistance of embassies and the Goethe Institute, and to investigate opportunities of in-business praxis with German corporations (along the lines sometimes promoted by the GIZ as ‘integrated programmes’).

The Romance Languages here benefit from the same resources available to the English and German programmes. It is the impression of the team that the basic facilities—classrooms, projection facilities, research databases—are up to the necessary standard, and are appropriate for effective teaching. In specific terms, there seem to be appropriate resources available for the Romance languages, although the team would encourage the Romance Languages instructors to pursue all opportunities to promote mobility opportunities for students, both outgoing and incoming.

Strengths

- Good physical premises appropriate to reasonable learning, teaching, and discussion.
- Reasonable library facilities given the age and structure of the University.
- Possibility to expand the programme size and offering without undue stress upon resources.

Areas for improvement

- Elective offerings should not be sacrificed or endangered for purely financial reasons.
- Database subscription and access are crucial for teaching resources and individual research; these should be maintained and acquired as ongoing high priorities.

Recommendations

- Preserve the variety and depth of elective offerings. If necessary, allow a process of Darwinian competition to winnow out the less popular options.
- Make database support and access acquisition high priorities—and consult programme staffs to determine which databases are most necessary for the specific programme requirements.
- Investigate the possibility (for German) of partial or full ‘integrated studies’ programmes in relation to in-business praxis. The basic concept of this is that academia and industry work collaboratively to provide practical in situ learning for students; the GIZ can advise about the applicability of this proposed model.

Teaching and learning

The teaching seems to be undertaken at a high level indeed; one of the members of the English staff was mentioned as having won a recent student award for being the best instructor in the Humanities. If he was not encouraged to give a training session to his colleagues, he should be. This training could also, *mutatis mutandis*, be provided to the staff of the German Language and Culture programme as well.

This exceptional success aside, it should be observed generally that the staff for both programmes appear to be well selected for their own academic backgrounds and research profiles.

In terms of learning, one element of concern arose almost immediately. It is apparently quite common for incoming students of both English and German to ‘drop-out’ early in the programme, or else find employment during the programme and never formally finish. Each student who begins must be expected to finish the programme, and should be provided all reasonable support to continue, even if the individual cannot attain on-time graduation.

It is unclear whether or not electronic resources are used with any inventiveness. The team had the impression that e-learning was something that had no clear foothold in the Tallinn University English and German programmes. Although there is no absolute need for e-learning at present, electronic resources allow for excellent opportunities to explore the regional and international characters of various Englishes. Similarly, the German programme

should investigate possibilities to develop their scholarship of regional or dialectal German varieties via e-learning opportunities for direct conversation or instruction from the various Germanophone regions.

Practical learning offers wonderful opportunities for in-business praxis and language use; yet it appears that the practical learning in this programme is essentially pass-fail, with almost no one failing. A course that is essentially a guaranteed pass has no clear purpose or rationale in a 21st century curriculum. It is also likely that the German programme has numerous opportunities for practical learning involving the extraordinary commonality of high-level German engineering or commercial entities in the Baltic region; if these could be developed into more close partnerships, that would be ideal.

The Romance Languages and Cultures again offer a contrast to the English and German programmes. It is the opinion of the team that the Romance Languages are quite simply understaffed, perhaps to the point of no longer being viable as degree programmes. It is a matter of intense and immediate concern to the team that the entire staff of the Romance Languages is (according to the Tallinn University Self-Evaluation Report) ‘6 permanent positions...and 1 lectureship.’ This is wholly inadequate for the provision of instruction in three different languages, particularly as subjects in which one may specialize to a BA degree level. It must be stated candidly that when the Self-Evaluation Report states that the Romance Languages and Cultures programme provides ‘an in-depth knowledge of Italian, French or Spanish languages, cultures, literatures, and history,’ the team simply disbelieves the possibility of that assertion. There are too few staff to provide that breadth of knowledge.

Strengths

- Teaching appears to be delivered at a very high level.
- The general attitude of teachers towards the institution and the students is supportive and professional.
- Staff expressed a willingness to communicate their own research interests to students through expanded elective offerings.

Areas for improvement

- Student attrition—drop outs and non-completers—are a major problem for the institution and for the programme.
- Electronic resources could be better developed, particularly along the lines of video-conferencing or Skype-conferencing teaching from other parts of the world (to emphasize varieties of English and English as a World Language).

- Practical teaching that is pass-fail should either be graded or abandoned as meaningless.
- Romance Languages and Cultures staff are too few for the provision of the full cultural and linguistic knowledge expected of a language programme graduate.

Recommendations

- Individual instructors should perhaps form mentorship partnerships with a small group of incoming students, and 'follow' them throughout their undergraduate career, and intervene when trouble is encountered.
- Investigate opportunities to 'co-teach' language or linguistic courses with worldwide partners via electronic resources.
- Establish a better system of assessing practical teaching. At present, by common account, the inevitable assessment is pass, for no clear reason (unless the student does something like withdraw completely from the university).
- Consider either hiring more instructors for the Romance Languages, or restricting the focus of Romance Languages to 'minor' specializations.

Teaching staff

As mentioned previously, the staff of the English and German programmes at Tallinn University are apparently well-respected by the students and have themselves attained reputable academic degrees from their own research.

It is unclear how reliably the institution can depend upon foreign lecturers. Although there are certainly occasional opportunities to obtain modular or guest lecturers, a better strategy might be to form institutional or departmental agreements with specific institutions or individuals to guarantee continuity of interaction and foreign engagement. In this area of development, again, e-learning opportunities (even on the basic lines of e-conferencing or Skype teaching) can dramatically expand the teaching available to students at a relatively minimal cost to the institution.

One area that may be worth consideration for the medium to long term development of both programmes is the uncommon (at least, in North American and European terms) reliance upon people who have come up from within the same institution in which they currently teach. It is common practice in Europe and North America not to hire graduates of one's own university, as this tends to diversify the teaching, scholarship, and perspectives available to students.

As mentioned previously, the Romance Languages staff are simply too few for the curricula they are expected to deliver. They seem to be committed and resourceful people, and the team wishes to express support for their efforts. Yet a decision should be taken—sooner rather than later—either to hire additional staff to support these language curricula, or else to reduce the course offerings from full degree programmes to, perhaps, ‘minor’ specializations for those majoring in German or English.

Finally, staff expressed concern about their teaching contracts, and about the stability of the contracts that they will be offered. This is a serious concern, and one that the institution should take seriously. An academic cannot work thoughtfully and well if he or she is under constant pressure of financial and professional uncertainty.

Strengths

The teaching staff possess academic and research *curricula vitae* that are appropriate for the positions they hold and for their teaching responsibilities.

Student surveys seem to verify the popularity and success of the teaching being delivered in the language programmes.

Staff seem concerned about the development of their programmes, and ready to contribute to any productive restructuring that serves the students in a better or more effective way.

Areas for improvement

- It is unclear whether or not there is any serious attempt to promote staff mobility opportunities.
- Staff still seem to be groomed often from within the institution. It is desirable to discourage continuing into the same institution from which one has graduated; hiring policies should be instituted to encourage fresh arrivals from other institutions.
- Romance Languages have 6 positions and 1 lectureship (sponsored by Spain). This is far too inadequate to cover three language degree programmes.
- Staff are confused or uncertain about their contractual status.

Recommendations

- Support and permit a competitive variety of self-generated electives for both the German and English programmes.

- Investigate and promote staff mobility programmes, particularly via renewable engagements with institutions in the target countries.
- Seek to discourage hiring of ‘internal’ candidates, and to promote hiring policies that encourage external applicants. This can often bring fresh perspectives, expertise, and practices into programmes and institutions.
- Determine either to hire additional staff for Italian, French, and Spanish language and culture offerings, or else reduce the programmes from full degree status to ‘minor’ status for those majoring in English or German.
- Clarify or explain the exact benefits, costs, and reasoning behind the current contractual status of the teaching staff in these programmes.

Students

The students of the language programmes assessed were articulate and poised. They served as persuasive ambassadors of their programmes, and made a favourable impression upon the team. The team would particularly like to extend their formal gratitude to the students for their insights.

In general terms, the students seem satisfied with their academic programmes, and are favourably impressed by their instructors. They feel that their programmes have (or will) make them competitive in the regional labour market, and will assist them in their future professional lives.

Several problems, however, persist. It should be noted that the students themselves noted that skills alone make employability possible; one does not need a diploma to obtain employment. No one, during the team’s visit, was able to articulate why one should pursue a degree if one does not need the certification for employment. This is a crucial failing in the public relations and recruitment policy of Tallinn University. A serious effort must be undertaken to explain the precise skills—beyond mere language proficiency—that are developed and verified by a full degree programme, such as public presentation, rhetorical ability, critical thinking, and an ability to digest information and summarize it thoughtfully and persuasively.

Similarly, students expressed an interest in the possibility of mobility programmes—which are highly desirable in language programmes—yet they were concerned that participation in mobility exchanges would result in a delay in their graduation. This is unacceptable. Tallinn University must, as a matter of high priority, create and sign learning agreements with any mobility partner, in which the named student undertakes to study specified courses, and Tallinn University agrees to recognize those credits. To delay a student’s academic progress

because of mobility exchanges is directly contrary to the processes of Bologna and to the whole structure of the ECTS system.

Strengths

- Students are motivated, skilled, and generally satisfied with their programmes and their university.
- The students who spoke with the team were, if representative, articulate and thoughtful.
- Language students tend to be better-positioned for mobility opportunities than are specialists in other programmes. It is also true that they often have a wider variety of professional skills that, if identified and developed, could well promote the programme and the university in the wider society.

Areas for improvement

- There is no clear reason to finish one's degree. One apparently needs only to stick at the work until obtaining employment, then drop out or vanish. This should be wholly unacceptable to the University.
- Mobility programmes seem to add delays into a student's academic progress. This is terribly and needlessly punitive, and is in direct contradiction to the spirit of European educational comparability.

Recommendations

- Both Tallinn University generally—and the English, German and Romance Language programmes individually—should institute policies that retain students, irrespective of employment elsewhere. This may be the result of direct intervention, changed educational status (i.e., perhaps moving students from full-time to part-time, or from in-class to distance-learning).
- Clear and effective policies must be undertaken to guarantee the credibility and applicability of learning agreements to protect and promote mobility agreements. No student should lose time or graduate in a delayed manner because of having participated in mobility programmes.

2.3.2. Translation (MA); Conference Interpreting (MA)

Study programme and study programme development

There is not only a new structure in Tallinn University, but also a new structure within the curricula of the Translation and Conference Interpreting programmes.

Strengths

- Good resources available
- Support coming from the EU in this area due to the forthcoming presidency of Estonia in 2018.
- LSP (Language for Special Purposes) Translation
- New courses have been introduced to support students in developing their theses

Areas for improvement

- There are two pathways (Translation + Conference Interpreting) within the Department and better coordination needs to be set up between the two.
- The pathway in Translation is split into two selective modules: LSP translation and literary translation. The former might be justified, but lacks the labour market needs assessment, while the second seems to meet specific internal demands. Instead of LSP as Language for Special Purposes which still focuses on languages and texts, LSP could have been Language Service Provider, focussing then openly on professional translators (and translators' competences).
- Uncertainty of leadership of the programme in Translation was revealed. More clarity is needed on the management tasks of the Head of the Translation programme.

Recommendations

- A survey of needs analysis in translation should be conducted on a regular basis.
- New practices related to translation should be considered, i.e. translation of web sites, advertisements, online games, etc.
- Despite the fact that the teaching staff said it is difficult to organize and coordinate meetings, the team strongly recommends that regular meetings be organized with different teachers of the study programme in order to achieve more coherence between classes/modules.

Resources

The university has a budget line for books procurement. There is an interlibrary loan service available. Students have access to the copying machine in the library, but a fee should be paid for.

Strengths

- The infrastructure available for the two programmes (IT, library, lab, interpreting room, classes, accessibility for disabled students, and accessibility of databases outside the premises).
- There is access to databases, through a password, from both campus and home and the students are trained on how to use the library resources starting from the BA level.

Teaching and learning

There is no justification/clarity why all the courses have the same number of credits (6.)

Strengths

- The objectives and means of the internship are met, meaning that students do learn through these practices. Internship is not a formal exercise.
- Topics selection and supervision of MA theses are well carried out.
- With a high turnover of the staff (both in translation and interpreting) it is difficult to achieve improvement in teaching methods and in research.

Areas for improvement

- The relevance of entrance tests should be clarified. Why test applicants with a translation task with no purpose when students apply because they would like to become translators?
- The list of competences and learning outcomes should be provided and explained for each course.
- Translation technologies should be improved and introduced earlier in the curriculum.
- Information about agreements with foreign universities needs to be clarified: Are they about language programmes, translation training, and/or any other topics/disciplines?
- Need to improve the amount of information and awareness about the domestic market of translation/interpretation.
- Monitoring of students during interpretation classes needs to be strengthened and improved to ensure improvement in the techniques of interpreting.
- Students required simulation classes (mock conferences).

Recommendations

- Explore more the domestic market and the languages needed for work in these areas.
- Define competences, learning outcomes and modalities of evaluation for each course.
- Consider ways of giving feedback to students in a more systematic manner, with an appropriate terminology or meta-language.

Teaching staff

The teachers seemed satisfied and not too overloaded with work.

Strength

- Native speakers of English as members of the teaching staff.
- Teaching staff members are educators and translators/interpreters as well.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of research among the teaching staff. The CVs reveal that research is limited in volume and scope.
- Staff should have regular meetings to discuss the curriculum, the interrelation between courses, teaching methods and assessment criteria.
- According to the teachers themselves, the University offers various formal possibilities for further education/teacher development, but they are not taken advantage of.
- Mobility of the teaching staff should be increased. The representatives of the TU mentioned that only two lecturers went to Brussels to take part in trainings and that it is difficult to obtain financial support to participate in international conferences.
- There is a risk related to a high level of turnover of staff in interpreting.
- Lack of innovation in pedagogy.

Recommendations

- The Institute should invest more in supporting the further development of the teaching staff.
- Regular meetings between teachers (full-time and part-time), between teachers and students should be organised to create a more pro-active, dynamic department.

- More opportunities should be provided by the University for pedagogical skills of the staff and staff should be encouraged to participate more actively.

Students

Strengths

- Information on theses (how to select a topic, how to carry out the piece of research, how to write the thesis) is provided in good time.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the participation of students in the curriculum development process. Students are not very active, partly because they do not know how it works, they do not know about the decision-making process, they are not aware of who is their representative in the university bodies.
- There is a need to strengthen the capacities of the counselling/guidance centre, since some students mentioned it is not of much use.

Recommendations

- Students should be more involved in the development of the programmes.
- Electronic tools such as translation memory software, terminology tools should be introduced earlier in the teaching.
- Specialisation should be updated/defined more regularly.
- Develop greater cooperation/synergy with institutions of law, economics, technology (manuals translation).
- Develop greater contacts with other Faculties/Universities, including from abroad.

2.3.3. Asian Studies (BA, MA)

Study programme and study programme development

The Asian Studies programme is structured around a three-year Bachelor degree followed by a two-year MA degree. The three-year BA programme is offered in three major areas – Japanese, Chinese and Middle Eastern studies. The focus is on intensive language work combined with a study of Asian cultures. The students can also choose electives from other programmes within the Institute of Humanities in order to complement language work and to gain an exposure to theoretical and critical thinking in the disciplines.

The student numbers in the Japanese programme are healthy, an average of 20 students a year, which when considered within the context of the undergraduate population of Estonia is a good number. Language classes involve intensive work and it is not uncommon to have relatively small numbers compared to other discipline-based subjects. There are four full-time staff who teach on this programme and are able to cover adequately the language and culture offerings. The Chinese programme has been steadily increasing its student intake and should meet the target of 20 students each year. Apart from two full-time staff in the Chinese programme who teach language and area studies, language teaching is also provided by the Confucius Institute. The Middle Eastern programme is the smallest within this configuration, taught by two full-time members of staff, one of whom is an expert in dialectology. There is currently no native speaker of Arabic in the programme. Numbers of enrolments are much smaller than the other two programmes.

The MA programme offers two kinds of degrees – one is based on the use of language sources in the chosen field of study while the second does not require language competence. An MA degree in Asian Societies and Politics or Philosophy of East Asia for example can be acquired without training in the relevant language.

Strengths

- The Asian Studies programme is run by a highly motivated and committed group of lecturers. The course structure for the BA degree is consistent with similar programmes offered in other tertiary institutions in the U.K., for example, where a balance is sought between intensive language training and area studies subjects.
- The possibility of taking electives from other disciplines is a sound pedagogical move as all too often students in area studies, whilst acquiring competence in their target language, fail to bring critical methods to bear on the subjects they study.
- The introduction of a new course in Academic Writing is also a welcome initiative as students are more likely to complete their degrees if they have a better idea of what kind of writing style, argumentation, and protocols of citation are expected at the tertiary level.
- The evaluations received from students suggest a high degree of satisfaction with the programme. On a scale of 1 to 5, comments indicated that courses are consistently rated as averaging in the range of 4.6-4.8.
- The Asian Studies programme used to offer courses in Sanskrit, Indian Studies and in Persian. These have been discontinued due to low enrolment figures and inadequate staff. This seems to have been a wise move as it would be better to

focus on a few key areas and build on the existing strengths of the programme rather than spreading itself too thin.

Areas for improvement

- The MA programme could be restructured such that a clear distinction is made between an MA degree that is based on language study and one that can be obtained without language proficiency. Currently students who acquire an MA with language work do not appear to be rewarded for the significantly higher amount of work required in order to acquire a language-based MA.
- Students on the BA programme, whilst expressing a high degree of satisfaction with the degree have nonetheless pointed out the difficulty of the courses and the workload. This is a problem that is seen in other institutions, which offer character-based languages such as Chinese and Japanese. Strategies need to be developed for taking the special case of such languages into consideration. For example, can the hours spent on these languages be weighted differently from other subjects in terms of the number of credit points acquired? This has been done in some Asian Studies departments in Australia.
- As it currently stands, the Middle Eastern programme is unable to cater to student interest in contemporary Arab speaking societies, and in the political crisis in that region. There is a vast gap between literary and spoken Arabic and yet there is no one on the programme that teaches spoken Arabic. This shortcoming needs to be addressed if the programme is to have a broader appeal for students who want to engage more directly with the region. Several students mentioned, for example, their desire to work with Syrian refugees who have arrived in Estonia.

Recommendations

- The programme should continue to build on its areas of strength in Chinese and Japanese. In the mid to long-term there should be an attempt to make appointments at the professorial level in these areas. Such appointees should be charged with developing a coherent orientation to their respective programmes such that eventually they come to occupy a niche position within Europe. What would make the Asian Studies programme stand out would be identifying an area/s of expertise, developing those areas, and not attempting to cover all the gaps and spreading themselves too thin.
- Given the strategically important nature of Middle Eastern Studies in today's world it is imperative that this particular programme be supported if it is to be

viable. In the mid-term it would be advisable to appoint a native speaker of Arabic who is able to introduce students to the contemporary cultures, politics and societies of some of the major countries in the region through a direct engagement with contemporary Arabic written and spoken materials. This would be an important complement to the current orientation towards literary texts and classical sources.

Resources

The Chinese programme is supported by the Chinese government and the Taipei Mission for its acquisition of language teaching materials and scholarly texts in the field. Since Estonia joined the EU, library assistance from the Japan Foundation has been discontinued and other sources for library acquisition need to be sought. There does not appear to be a specific funding body to support the acquisition of Arabic language resources. The central library has no well-defined and structured policy for acquiring materials in any of these three areas. There are no Estonian textbooks for studying Asian languages.

Strength

- Currently staff uses their personal resources to acquire teaching materials and other aids to facilitate teaching in these areas. This is a strength only in so far as it demonstrates the strong commitment teachers have to their students and their determination to see the programmes sustained at an adequate level.

Area for improvement

- The library facilities in the three areas – Chinese, Japanese and Middle Eastern Studies – are clearly not adequate if these programmes are to expand.

Recommendations

- A coherent acquisition strategy needs to be worked out to strengthen the existing collection. In the Romance languages, for example, there is a designated subject librarian in charge of ordering books. A similar appointment needs to be in place for Eastern languages and for Middle Eastern studies.
- Other sources of funding from within the EU need to be explored to build on the existing collection.
- If the language of instruction for teaching Chinese, Japanese and Arabic is to be primarily in Estonian as opposed to say English – and this is a decision that the university needs to make – then the university needs to invest in a long-term strategy to fund the production of language materials in Estonian.

Teaching and learning

Given the relatively small number of students in each programme, the lecturers in the Asian Studies programme take a highly personalised interest in their students, and work far beyond the requirements of their contract to facilitate student learning. Staff-student consultation often takes a more informal form given that each lecturer is well acquainted with the individual student and his or her needs.

Strength

- The above comments indicate that the teaching and learning in Asian Studies may not follow the standard routes elsewhere of rigorous, anonymous procedures for marking and formalised staff–student consultation but on the other hand they more than make up for this loose structure by being acutely attuned to the individual needs and problems of students. This is a form of interaction that constitutes a strength especially where lecturers are dealing with a relatively small cohort of students.

Areas for improvement

- A significant number of students do not complete their BA and MA degrees within the 3/2 year period. This is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed.
- Although approximately 200 students study Chinese and Japanese at Estonian schools there is a relatively low enrolment of these students at the tertiary level in the Asian Studies programme at Tallinn University. This issue needs to be addressed. How can students be encouraged to continue their studies?

Recommendations

- In the mid to long-term, if there is expansion of student numbers, there needs to be in place formal procedures for student complaints and for redress of these complaints. It may be appropriate, if staff numbers increase, to put in place new marking procedures, which guarantee anonymity and second marking. As it currently stands, lecturers and students are well acquainted with one another and the personalised nature of the interaction may make anonymous marking unrealistic. However, it is important that the security of standards is assured.
- It is important to identify why high school students do not proceed to take Asian languages at the tertiary level. The university needs to put in place orientation days where high school students who have studied Chinese and Japanese are targeted and invited to Tallinn University to be briefed about how their language skills and knowledge of the region will be enhanced at the tertiary level. It will

also give the programme a chance to ascertain what students with a background in these languages are looking for at university level, and in part develop a curriculum that meets these needs.

Teaching staff

The teaching staff for Japanese studies comprises four full-time staff members. Chinese has two full-time staff with aid from language teachers from the Confucius Institute. Middle Eastern Studies is run by two full-time staff members. Apart from one member of staff in Middle Eastern Studies all other staff are junior members, who have either recently completed their PhDs or are in the process of doing so. The number of courses they are able to offer is limited by the number of teaching staff and by the areas that they can cover.

Many staff members are active participants in the intellectual life of Estonia, lecturing and commenting in the media and promoting Asian Studies within the wider community. Several staff members have sought to popularise Asian culture within the wider Estonian public by producing translations of key texts from these languages into Estonian.

All staff teach a large number of hours and do not have enough time to engage in research. They also do not have the time or resources to attend conferences that would facilitate professional development in their respective research fields.

Strengths

- There is a genuine commitment amongst staff members to promote Asian Studies to the wider Estonian public.
- The translation series is a very commendable activity as it introduces Estonians to the literatures and cultures of a region that they would not normally have access to.

Areas for improvement

- Staff need to be in an environment where they are able to develop professionally by attending academic conferences, and where they have time to publish.
- Strategies need to be developed to reduce the number of hours and courses that staff currently teach.

Recommendations

- In order for staff to engage in research activity there needs to be some adjustment of their teaching responsibilities. Currently staff who are still doing their PhDs teach a large number of courses. Staff at higher levels of appointment are expected to carry a lower teaching workload. However, Asian Studies

programme is run overwhelmingly by very junior staff. Those who need the most time to complete their PhD research are afforded very little of it in this system. In order to aid successful completion of PhDs, staff who are near completion should be granted teaching relief.

- More funding needs to be made available for staff to attend international conferences to facilitate professional development.
- In the long term greater investment in staff numbers is the only way to overcome the current crisis in lack of research time for teaching staff.
- One creative way of widening the area of expertise within the department would be to have guest lecturers visiting for short, intense periods of teaching from other universities within Estonia and from institutions within Europe. Such an arrangement existed some years ago and it should be allowed to flourish. Not only is this a pragmatic approach to staffing; it also allows for productive interaction between researchers from Tallinn University and those within the wider academic community in Europe and the U.S. It also exposes students to a wider range of ideas and teaching styles than the ones to which they are currently exposed, given that many of the courses are taught by the same lecturers.

Students

Students express a high level of satisfaction with the teaching they are given during their BA and MA degrees. Both the Chinese and Japanese programmes have exchange agreements with Chinese and Japanese universities where students are able to spend a year doing in-country study. The Middle Eastern programme does not have such an arrangement in the main because there is not one target country and furthermore because of the unstable political situation in the region.

There is a problem with the dropout rate and with students taking longer than the prescribed time to finish their degrees.

There does not seem to be a clear career ladder for students who have done the Asian Studies degree. Many students find part-time work in tourism and in creative industries.

Strengths

- Students are able to spend a year doing in-country study in the case of China and Japan.

- The admission process for students is innovative. Students are formally interviewed and are expected to discuss a particular text that they have read in advance, and to be able to explain their motivation for embarking on the chosen degree. Masters students are given the opportunity to discuss their research plan, and to ascertain whether or not it is an area of research that can reasonably be supervised within the department.

Areas for improvement

- The relatively high dropout rate amongst students needs to be redressed. Students need to finish their degrees in a timely fashion.
- Students need to be told precisely what career options are available to them upon completion. The degree needs to be structured such that it meets the practical needs of students who are in the job market at the end of their degrees.

Recommendations

- A comprehensive survey of student expectations needs to be conducted in order to ascertain why some of them are unable to finish their degrees on time. Students have pointed to the difficulty of the courses, in particular of the writing system of some of the languages, and to the general workload in the BA programme. Some form of special weighting for East Asian languages, which acknowledges the special difficulties of learning the writing systems of these languages may be considered. It is a well-established fact that learning Chinese and Japanese is simply more time consuming than learning a Romance language for example.
- There also needs to be a proper record of the activities of alumni, what jobs they have secured after a degree in Asian Studies, and to what extent the jobs they hold rely on their areas of specialisation. More targeted learning might help students make better use of their particular qualifications.
- The Career Office of the university should be proactive in guiding students towards job possibilities that allow them to use their areas of expertise.
- Students should be given the opportunity to take charge of their learning and professional outcomes. A survey needs to be conducted of their expectations after completing their degree. Both teaching staff and the careers office should in a coordinated manner be available to advise students on what they can realistically expect to do upon completion of their degree.

2.3.4. Russian Philology (BA); Slavonic Languages and Cultures (MA)

Study programme and study programme development

The names of the programmes (Russian Philology and Slavic Languages and Cultures) are compatible with the name of the field of study and its learning outcomes, which include Slavic languages, linguistics, literature, culture, and history knowledge of Russia at different levels, editing, translation, and teaching skills.

The Russian Philology programme (BA) in its current form, which combines two curricula strands, Russian Philology and Russian as a Foreign Language, has been in operation since the 2011/12 academic year. Prior to this, these strands functioned as two separate curricula.

The Slavonic Languages and Cultures programme (MA) has been functioning since 2002. Its main content has remained the same, although the number of elective modules has been reduced in order to streamline the programme and make it more subject-specific and professionally oriented.

Both programmes are well incorporated into the general curriculum structure of the Languages and Cultures study programme at Tallinn University, and passed the transitional internal evaluation in 2010.

Strengths

- The aims and learning outcomes of both programmes correspond with the activities performed by philologists, translators, and editors. Abilities in intercultural communication are also developed and are mentioned among the requirements for specialists.
- Curriculum design meets the legal requirements set out for higher education study programmes in Estonia. The subjects are spread evenly. The modules are consistent with the level of studies.
- The analysis of the subject-specific competence and learning outcomes indicates that the programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered, and that the name of the programmes, their learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with one another.
- Both programmes are student-oriented and develop the competences necessary

to seem to meet the needs of social and personal development, the labour market, and to help the students to acquire competences compatible with their bachelor's degree. They also prepare the students for further studies or work in certain areas (MA programme).

- After closely analysing the curriculum design of both programmes and during discussions with staff and students, the team noted that there is clear evidence of logical progression of modules/subjects content from level to level. This corresponds well with planned learning outcomes.

Areas for improvement

- According to the Self-Evaluation Report, the Curriculum Council incorporates “feedback received from students, lecturers, and employers” (p.71) into any planned changes of the curriculum. However, the team did not find any consistent and clear evidence of market needs analysis, employer feedback, or incorporation of practice into the BA programme in particular.
- In our discussions with staff and students, we picked up tensions concerning the content of the future curricula and concerns about the future of both programmes in the newly formed Institute of Humanities. There appears to be poor dissemination of information within the university and a lack of wide consultations with staff and students.
- Although there is a university wide compulsory on-line student feedback on subject courses, there seems to be no formally established system of informing students about its results analysis and any changes implemented.

Recommendations

- It might be advisable to consider an introduction, where appropriate, of a practical credit bearing element into existing modules within the BA curriculum (e.g. a practice in an editing office, teacher observation, or shadowing museum curators, translators, etc.). This would also facilitate regular feedback from prospective employers and the analysis of market needs.
- In order to reduce the anxiety levels of staff and students and ensure a smooth transition to the new curricula, it is our recommendation that a more clear and consistent communication strategy is considered between senior management and teaching staff and students.

- To ensure a formal follow-up process on students' feedback, we recommend an implementation of a Staff/Student Liaison Committee, which would meet once per semester to discuss any matters arising from student feedback.+

Resources

During the meeting with students it was revealed that they were generally happy with the university and the Institute's facilities.

Strengths

- The university library has a wide variety of materials for Russian and Slavonic studies, including electronic resources and databases. There is open access to publications in Russian (literary theory, folklore, linguistics, dictionaries, reference books, encyclopaedias, periodicals in the field of philology), including many fundamental and modern works in Russian Studies. Both students and teachers can use databases subscribed to by the university library. Overall, the students were very complimentary about the teaching and learning facilities at the university.
- In addition to the university library resources, the Institute of Slavonic Languages and Cultures has its own small library, which contains books donated by subject-specific research organisations and individuals from various countries.
- Teaching rooms are well equipped and fit for purpose.
- There is good provision for students with disabilities, for example, access for wheelchairs and lifts. Students with special needs are encouraged to contact their departments as early as possible, so that the university is able to make the necessary arrangements in time for the students to participate in their studies fully. Some reading halls in the university library are accessible for wheelchairs. The Tieman Reader Color device is available for students with impaired vision at the university library and at the Study Centre in the Astra building. Five university buildings have toilet facilities for people with special needs.

Areas for improvement

- During our discussion with students we were informed that some books (literary texts in particular) were in short supply.
- After close analysis of modules reading lists, the team also noted that some core texts are quite old (e.g. the "earliest" core text on General & Special Theories of Translation is dated 1980; on a number of other modules the sources are no more modern than 2000 - 2003).

- Although the university strives to provide support for students with special needs, there seems to be no centralised formal system for its implementation. Currently it is limited to a request that all students with special needs inform student advisors of the study department that deals with support services.

Recommendations

- A regular and thorough revision of key sources is recommended in order to be up-to-date with the latest theories and research, and to ensure a sufficient number of hard copies in the library.
- The team felt that a university-wide scheme of Student Enabling Centres could be considered. Such Centres might be established in each faculty and staffed with professionally trained note takers for visually and hearing impaired students. Also, interpreters for deaf students and note takers for students with dyslexia could be a possibility. These Centres could monitor student enrolment information and compile the necessary data for each faculty. This could then be communicated to special needs advisors within the various departments. Members of staff could be informed about the students who require special arrangements.

Teaching and learning

Strengths

- Both programmes are flexible and student-oriented and help students suit their personal interests and needs. This was strongly emphasised during the meeting with students.
- Clear evidence of strong research profile of staff feeding into teaching; students' involvement in research.
- The team found that there is a variety of teaching methods, although most courses rely on a combination of short or long essays, exams, language tests, presentations (single or group) and general seminar participation. Lectures and seminars form the basis of teaching. Students commented favourably on the structure of lectures within BA and MA courses. They emphasised the importance of discussions during lectures, the open and friendly atmosphere within the department, dedicated and inspirational lecturers. The students praised the approachability of lecturers for oral feedback or feedback by e-mail.
- A well-established process of professional practice placements (MA programme). A pre-internship meeting with the internship coordinator, clear guidelines on the

internship process and assessment requirements (final report and internship diary) were particularly praised by the students

- During the meeting with teaching staff we found that they have a great deal of autonomy in how they design, teach and assess their courses.

Areas for improvement

- Although the study programmes seem to be working well, the discussions with teaching staff and students indicated that a large number of elective modules from different institutes are still somewhat overwhelming and confusing.
- Although the subjects given in the MA programmes cover a wide range of topics within the field of Russian and Slavonic Philology, it was a little surprising to discover that there are no modules on topics such as language policy and multilingualism, particularly, taking into account the constantly changing functions of Russian Language in post-Soviet space and in the world.
- One of the challenges on the MA programme (teacher training) was highlighted during the meetings with the programme manager and teaching staff, namely, teaching students with vast age and experience differences, i.e. recent graduates with no teaching experience and teachers who already work in schools.
- During our meeting with students we detected some concerns related to the absence of practically oriented work on the BA programme. Students felt that field trips collecting language data, work shadowing in schools, museums, and editorial offices, etc. would be an advantage and might increase student retention on the BA programme. The optional editing module seems to be very popular with students and they would like to see similar compulsory modules (or at least practical elements within the compulsory modules).
- From our discussions with staff and students it transpired that the assessment system and methods are chosen by teachers in accordance with anticipated learning outcomes and are objective. None of the students could recall a case when he/she had been assessed subjectively. However, there does not seem to be a formal system in place, which ensures the objectivity of assessments either within or across the departments.
- Although all members of staff use the Study Information System, which is linked to MOODLE, the use of MOODLE as an e-learning environment for the courses is not consistent. There seems to be no university-wide policy on the use of e-learning platforms.

Recommendations

- The Team recommends consideration of an internal support system that helps students to choose elective modules most relevant to their programmes. This might be a part of the induction/welcome week process at the beginning of each academic year, facilitated by personal tutors (see also an earlier recommendation on Personal Tutor system). It is particularly important for students of junior years across different subject areas.
- It might be beneficial to consider the inclusion of socio-political elements analysing the position of Russian in the modern multilingual globalised world and its changing functions in post-Soviet space into existing courses, where possible.
- The team feels that a careful consideration of practical elements might make the BA programme more attractive for prospective students and help to reduce early drop-out rates (e.g. credit bearing short work placements, assignments based on data collected by the students, etc.).
- The above point might also help to ease tensions in teaching two different “age/experience” groups on MA programmes.
- The team suggests that a unified transparent system of assessment feedback should be discussed and implemented. It could be modelled on the moderation and double marking system used in many European universities, which aims to provide transparent and objective feedback by ensuring that all written and oral assignments awarded top and fail grades are marked by a second tutor. A further 10% sample of other grades is also marked by a second tutor. In the case of significant discrepancies between the marks by different tutors, the results are moderated. Assessment criteria should be clearly stated not only in course descriptions, but also on feedback sheets for all assignments. These should be comparable across all languages taught at the faculty. The whole process should be formally documented. The form of the moderation sheets and procedures could be established internally. The team suggests that the Institute could run a pilot moderation project and then forward it to Senior Management for faculty and university-wide discussion.
- It is suggested that an e-learning strategy should be implemented to ensure a transparent and uniform use of an e-learning platform by all members of staff on various courses, particularly in the light of increasing interdisciplinarity within the new Institute of Humanities.

Teaching staff

Strengths

- The members of the academic staff implementing the Russian Philology and Slavonic Languages and Cultures study programmes are highly competent and well qualified. All members of staff teaching on the MA programme have PhDs. The total number of staff at the Institute of Slavonic Languages and Culture is 17, the number of students enrolled on the programmes is 250, therefore, student/staff ratio is 14.7 to 1. This is sufficient to ensure a smooth implementation of the programmes and the achievement of learning outcomes.
- Many members of the teaching staff are active researchers and some are distinguished scholars of national and international standing. In the last three years the Institute's members of staff won the university-wide competition for the best monograph and the best textbook twice.
- The staff members are very dedicated to their programmes and teachers are highly motivated.
- During the meeting with staff the team received good evidence of staff involvement in academic mobility, for example, teaching in partner institutions, research visits, national and international conference attendance. As a result, the Institute of Slavonic Languages and Cultures became involved in the IUT research project for 2014-19.
- Student feedback on teaching quality is consistently high. During our meeting with students, we learned that staff are very helpful, highly professional, passionate about their subjects, and approachable.
- Staff development is supported centrally by the university. Several members of the group we met took the opportunity to attend various internal training courses (e.g. using MOODLE, Academic Presentation in English, etc.).

Areas for improvement

- Although there are clearly very good examples of teaching practices within the Institute, there is no formal system of peer observation. There seems to be no formal process to ensure that good practices are spread not only across the Institute, but across all cognate areas.
- There was some uncertainty expressed regarding staff contracts. Until 2015 all staff were on a five year contract and their performance was reviewed at the end of the period. However, with the current changes and restructuring within the faculty, it is not clear, how staff performance, needs, and contracts are going to be assessed.

- There were also some concerns with regard to communication and open discussion between the Senior management of the Institute and the departments. There seem to be various committees looking at the curricula and programme changes, including staff and students, but there is no clear communication strategy for the review process.

Recommendations

- We feel that a formal and regular peer observation system would contribute to the practice of sharing the best teaching, assessment, and research developments between the different departments of the Institute.
- It might be advisable to introduce an internal annual staff appraisal scheme in order to assess lecturers' needs and achievements.
- A clear communication strategy between Senior management and all departments of the Institute should be developed (with clear indications of the responsibilities, communication channels and deadlines for faculty consultations).

Students

Strengths

- The students we met were highly motivated, articulate, and satisfied with the programmes.
- They were positive about their learning environment and resources.
- There is varied international student body and clear evidence of student learning mobility.
- Excellent command of Russian and English.
- Active participation in various student committees (within the department and university-wide).

Area for improvement

- No particular comments, apart from the students' desire to have more practically oriented elements within the modules on the BA programme and a larger number of certain literary texts in the library.
- From discussions with staff and students, the team found that the drop-out rate for the BA programme is a considerable problem. This mostly occurs during the first

year of study due to the wrong choice of programme or personal and financial reasons. The drop-out problem is also common during level 3 and is usually related to the non-completion of the final thesis (BA).

Recommendations

- It might be advisable to consider an introduction, where appropriate, of practical credit bearing elements into the existing modules within the BA curriculum.
- Regular review of the availability of key texts.
- In order to diminish drop-out rates we suggest that a Personal Tutor system (similar to the one used in many European universities) could be established for first year students, where each member of the academic staff has a small group of first year students allocated to them and conducts regular meetings with their tutees to monitor their problems and progress. It is also suggested that in the future the choice of the final thesis topic might be extended to incorporate students' practical experience in companies. This might also lead to a higher completion rate of theses and lower drop-out rate in the final year of BA studies.

2.3.5. Estonian Philology (BA); Estonian as a second language and Estonian Culture (BA); Finnish Philology (BA)

Study programme and study programme development

The programmes of Estonian as first and second language and Finnish are of direct relevance to the society. The three programmes notably train teachers of Estonian, both mother tongue teachers and Estonian as second language teachers, as well as language professionals who work in different positions in language planning, editing, public relations, communication, or the like.

Professionals of the Estonian language are naturally essential for various needs of the society. Teaching Estonian as a second language is of great importance given that a considerable percentage of the population are non-native speakers. The increasing number of immigrants adds to the importance of Estonian as a second language education. Educated individuals with a high proficiency of Finnish are also necessary in the Tallinn area in particular, and in a number of other areas as well. Thus, overall, the programme is an obviously necessary and beneficial one.

Strengths

- In a time of insecurity for humanists, the programmes of Estonian and Finnish offer comparably good employment prospects for their graduates. The Finnish language

programme in particular enables the students to be employed, to the extent that they fail to graduate or continue to the MA level because of being employed.

- The Estonian as second language and Estonian culture programme has a strong specialisation.

Areas for improvement

- There seems to be no MA programme in which students of the Finnish language BA programme may continue their studies of the language. They are expected to be fully proficient after three years, which may not be realistic especially for those students who start with little or no prior command of the Finnish language.
- The programme for Estonian as a second language and Estonian Culture is directed rather specifically for native speakers of Russian who have gone to Estonian schools and who already have a fairly good proficiency of the language. The students primarily expect to improve their Estonian language skills, while the programme primarily aims to train them to be teachers of Estonian as a second language. It seems odd that teachers of Estonian should be predominantly non-native speakers. There seem to be two different contents somewhat mixed in the programme.
- The programmes seem to suffer from an image problem: despite comparably good employment prospects, many potential students opt for disciplines with better salary expectancies. The salary level of teachers seems particularly un motivating.

Recommendations

- The transition from the BA level to the MA level should be secured in such a way that there are no dead ends. Specifically, those who receive their BA degree in the Finnish language should have a real opportunity to pursue their Finnish studies at the MA level.
- The programme of teaching Estonian as a second language could be better differentiated from learning Estonian as a second language. Training native speakers of Estonian as teachers of Estonian as a second language seems justified at present but is not done in the existing programmes. Training non-native speakers of Estonian in their language and culture skills seems equally justified, and could perhaps be directed to a broader audience and should perhaps not require previous command of the language.

Resources

Generally speaking, the programme has access to good resources. The university has taken care of its infrastructure (premises, equipment, library services, and the like). On the other hand, financial resources do not allow the programme to invest in all the necessary teaching positions. In particular, the need for a professor of Finnish was mentioned in both the Self-Evaluation Report and the interviews. While a full professor may not, strictly speaking, be necessary in a subject with no MA level programme, the need for an MA programme of Finnish also came up.

Strengths

- Both faculty members and students were highly satisfied with the physical environment, the information systems, and the library services, including access to online databases.
- There are good opportunities for teaching mobility.

Areas for improvement

- The available financial resources seemed somewhat insecure. The staff members were not entirely confident of their employment in the future. Research-related expenses, e.g. participation in conferences, are expected to be covered by external project funding which is subject to competition and therefore insecure.
- Both students and especially staff members seem to hope for better opportunities for international mobility.

Recommendation

- We note here the general problem of faculty salaries not being sufficiently competitive in the employment market. However, addressing this problem is possible only in a larger context, so we cannot offer a particular recommendation.

Teaching and learning

The programme is generally well organised with regard to teaching and learning. A major problem is the lack of the relevant MA level studies for students who graduate from the BA programme of Finnish. Given that this is a subject highly relevant to the society and the labour market, this problem should definitely be addressed in some way.

Strengths

- Students appreciated the flexibility of their studies and teachers, and the way that the university allows them to combine studying and working simultaneously.
- There have been positive experiences of visits to, and contacts with, potential employers.
- There are excellent resources for using e-learning methods in teaching.
- Some courses have included some visits to potential workplaces. Students found such visits extremely helpful.

Areas for improvement

- There is a vast variety in the language proficiency of first year Finnish students: some have no command of the language, while some have attended Finnish schools for several years and have a C-level proficiency. Those with the least skills may be discouraged by this, while those with the best skills may find it difficult to find useful content in the programme.
- Students of Finnish, as well as those of Estonian as second language, seem to expect more teaching of language skills.
- Not all students had experiences of contacts with potential employers, visits to workplaces, or the like. Increasing such contacts, and bringing students and potential employers together, would be welcomed by the students, and might also provide the staff with useful feedback from the employers.
- Pedagogical studies are only available at the MA level. It would perhaps be beneficial to develop teaching skills over a longer period of time, and divide pedagogical studies between the BA and MA levels.
- Existing e-learning possibilities are not used to their full potential.

Recommendations

- Teachers of the Finnish language programme should try to find motivating ways of engaging students with different language skills in learning activities. We recognise the fact that the learning groups are too small to be divided into subgroups by skill levels, but the more advanced students could learn from helping the less advanced ones.
- Starting an MA programme of Finnish language and culture should be considered.

Teaching staff

The members of the teaching staff are generally well qualified and there seem to be no major issues in this area. As noted above, starting an MA programme in Finnish language and culture should be considered, and in the same context, recruiting a full professor of Finnish should also be considered.

Strengths

- The teaching staff are adequately qualified for their work. Many of them are highly experienced teachers, and some are active researchers at the international level. The faculty is committed to teaching and to the students, and the students seem satisfied with their teachers.
- The recent structural reform has combined previous units in a way which encourages staff members to collaborate across disciplines.
- Staff members seem satisfied with both internal and external communication. They consider the university to be a good workplace.

Areas for improvement

- Members of the teaching staff do not seem to be fully aware of the exact nature of the structural changes which have taken place at the university.
- Possibilities for the staff members to develop their professional skills exist, but they do not seem to be used to their full extent.
- There appears to be no regular assessment or evaluation of staff members and their work.

Recommendations

- Staff members should be encouraged more to improve their pedagogical skills, e-learning methodology, etc. This should be acknowledged in regular assessment together with other factors, e.g. research output.
- Recruiting a professor of Finnish should be considered, in particular if an MA programme is thought necessary.

Students

As is the case in most academic programmes in the country, attracting a sufficient number of students is a growing problem due to demographic trends. The programme has managed

to overcome this problem quite well so far, but attention should be paid to informing potential future students about the programme.

Strength

- The programmes are successful in attracting a sustainable number of students despite the demographic trend towards significantly smaller generations.

Areas for improvement

- Many students discontinue their studies during or directly after the first year of their studies. This is in part due to financial and other practical factors, but apparently also due to a lack of knowledge of the nature and content of university studies in general and in the programmes in question in particular.
- The varying initial skill level of students especially in the Finnish programme is a challenge.
- Many of the students work on a full time basis during their studies. While we understand the economic realities involved, this inevitably has an effect on their studies. Since they typically are not strictly required to attend lectures, they may not be as committed to their studies as they could be.

Recommendation

- More attention should be given to preventing first year students from dropping out. More information about the nature of the programmes should be given to potential future students, and more support in general study skills and planning should be given to new students.

3. Assessment report of SPG at the University of Tartu

Study programme group	<i>Languages and Cultures</i>
Higher education institution	University of Tartu
Study programmes	English Language and Literature (BA) English Studies (MA) German Language and Literature (BA) German Studies (MA) Romance Studies (BA, MA) Classical Philology (BA, MA) Russian and Slavic Languages and Literatures (BA) Slavic Studies (MA) Scandinavian Studies (BA, MA) Translation Studies (MA) Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics (BA, MA) Literature and Cultural Research (BA); Literature and Theatre Research (MA)

3.1. Some characteristics of the University of Tartu

The University of Tartu (UT) is one of the oldest universities in Northern and Eastern Europe. It was founded in 1632 by King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. The university was founded with the idea of pursuing research and of advancing learning in a wide variety of disciplines. It has continued to adhere to this tradition. There is a long and continuous history of the teaching of humanities and languages in the university. The University is rightly proud of its past and present eminence. It occupies superb and historical buildings in the centre of the city and it possesses an enviable wealth of library resources, so fundamental to the successful study of humanities and cultures. The University of Tartu has a prestigious past and is acknowledged as the leading research institution in Estonia with a clear and expressed commitment to recognise and promote the value of Estonian culture, society and language.

The strategic aims of the university are to ensure an international standard in teaching and research, to attract international students and staff, to further develop centres of excellence, to influence Estonian society, to promote lifelong learning and to maintain and

work towards a modern infrastructure. The team saw during its visit that the language and cultural areas were in the course of restructuring, with a major move to a different building. It is hard to comment on the nature of this move until it is completed. However, the team can say with some confidence that there was a sense of shared excitement among the staff, and a real sense that they had been involved in discussions about the new structure. Communication channels appear to be excellent.

The University has an ambitious mission: as the national university of Estonia it bears the responsibility for solving problems facing society by ensuring the continuity of Estonian intellectual life, language and culture and by contributing to the development of education, research, technology and other creative activities throughout the world. The study of other languages and cultures clearly has a role in this ambition, even in areas which are clearly not financially viable and which, in many institutions, would be at risk. There are particular pressures on this University but the team got a genuine sense of solidarity and collegiality.

The development objectives for the period 2015-2020 are:

- Graduates who change the world;
- Research and development work that has a global impact and guides the development of Estonia;
- Innovation and enterprising spirit through which knowledge finds its way into the economy;
- Organisation that inspires and unites people;
- Survival of Estonian language and national culture.

Any one of these objectives can be seen to relate to the areas under study.

The team was not able to formulate a view on Scandinavian Studies as there was no specific meeting during the visit that allowed it to consider the matter in depth. However, it is clear that many of the recommendations about the fragility of the area do apply.

3.2. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

At the time of the visit, the College of World Languages and Cultures was in the process of moving from one building to another, so comments on the nature of teaching areas would not be appropriate. The restructuring that was taking place seemed to be welcomed by the staff whom the team met during the visit. Some areas of activity are small and fragile and some thought must be given about the nature of the provision and what is possible with few resources and very few teachers. Covering the full curriculum may not be possible. Perhaps

more thought should be given to the creation of new degrees with a 90/90 division of credits. See also the general conclusions.

The formation of a new College of World Languages and Cultures can and should allow more formal and uniform procedures to take place, on assessment procedures, staff appraisal, peer review, staff-student committees, feedback from questionnaires, appeals and penalties. There is some good practice within the College that is not yet shared by all the language areas. This is a time when the overall quality of provision can be improved.

There needs to be a proactive campaign to assert and advertise the value of a language degree. Perhaps have a 'face of languages'? A conference on 'Why Languages Matter'? The University must seek to find ways of ensuring the completion of courses of study so that students proceed to graduation. Consider using the web site to advertise the value and interest of language degrees at Tartu, using staff and indeed students both from Estonia and from other countries. The situation of languages in universities reflect the situation in schools, and it is perhaps here that the work has to begin, suggesting to parents and decision makers that languages other than English are also important in Europe and beyond.

Consider the possible creation of online courses that could supplement areas of activity. Consider also the use of videoconferencing to broaden the curriculum. Seek to establish minimum standards of provision in, for example, Moodle.

Establish clarity of contractual positions of staff to give some sense of job security.

The team could find no formal policy of student retention, no targets.

The team found a true sense of collegiality and excellent language skills of staff and students.

The team saw no evidence of a formal review process of programmes, and would recommend that the University considers this as a means of ensuring the currency and strength of programmes.

3.3. Strengths and Areas for Improvement of Study Programmes by Assessment Areas

3.3.1. English, German, Roman and Classical Languages and Cultures (BA, MA)

Study programme and study programme development

UT has a long and distinguished history of language and literary study. This positions the institution well to attract both determined students and collegial universities for

collaborative partnerships. It is therefore heartening to note that the main western language programmes on the BA and MA levels—here, specifically, English Language and Literature (BA), English Studies (MA), German Language and Literature (BA), German Studies (MA), and Romance Studies (BA, MA) are similar to first and second cycle programmes in these fields throughout Europe. There appears to be a strong sense of collegiality amongst the academic staff of these programmes. They also, moreover, appear to recognize the logic of recent and contemplated changes, and have expressed a willingness to show solidarity amongst departments and programmes to promote language study generally.

This approach is laudable. It should be noted as a general observation, however, that there appear to be significant discrepancies amongst the various language programmes. Thus, for example, the English Language and Literature (BA) and English Studies (MA) both look sustainable, meritorious, and well-structured. The staff are highly competent to offer this instruction; they seem well aware of the primary developments and trends in their fields; and they have an obvious commitment to—and vision for—their programmes. These two programmes are exemplary: yet it should be noted that they are greatly assisted in their pursuit of excellence by the continuing desirability of English as a world language for diplomacy, scholarship, commerce, and tourism.

Other language programmes at Tartu University appear to have equally skilled and committed staff, yet seem to exist in a slightly worrisome area of twilight around the English programmes. German, for example, should be a programme of extraordinary strength, and both the BA and MA programmes appear well-staffed and intelligently structured. Yet it is the concern of this team that German is a programme that is not absolutely certain that it will continue to receive support if student enrolments drop, or demographic and economic pressures in Estonia produce suppressed enrolment and early drop-outs. Because of the value of the German language in the world today, and the extensive historical and cultural connections between the Baltic and the Germanophone homelands, a strong commitment by the University to the German BA and MA is to be encouraged (and, it is to be hoped, to be supported collegially by the English instructors).

The Romance Studies seem the most imperilled. To be blunt, the team is not convinced that there is a solid institutional commitment to these language programmes for their cultural value alone; it may be that they will not be kept alive by external support if their student numbers prove unsustainable. There is no good reason why Spanish or French should need to fight for students or funding, and it was the great pleasure of the team to be able to speak with several current or former students of French and Spanish—and they were articulate, thoughtful, and persuasive ambassadors for their programmes. Yet it must be acknowledged that these programmes do not have the reliably strong enrolment of English, nor the cultural and historical associations of German, and therefore the Romance Language staff are urged to meet, discuss, and refine their programme, to assure enrolments and programme attractiveness in the international educational market of offerings.

During several discussions with Tartu University language instructors the team also met individuals responsible for, or participating in, Classical Philology. We have absolutely no doubt of the intellectual and cultural value of studying the Greek and Latin cultures and languages, and of attempting to produce graduates capable of Latin instruction in the local high schools (one goal of the programme, as stated to the team). The team feels happy to endorse the provision of Classics instruction at Tartu University, yet feels also that it must be acknowledged openly as being a programme that must be sustained on the strength and enrolments of other programmes. From what the team was able to establish, the Classical Philology programme even now is not, objectively, sustainable without external buttresses. The team recognizes that the intellectual and cultural value of the offering may merit external support from other programmes, but it is difficult to make specific recommendations about a programme that acknowledges that it is already dependent upon the generosity of the University. It was also unclear to the team how precisely the programme in Classical Philology fit into the team's remit for modern languages.

Strengths

- English is strong, sustainable, and well-staffed at both the 1st and 2nd cycle levels.
- German is well-designed and well-staffed, and merits strong programmatic support.
- It is encouraging that languages that are not highly popular (Spanish, Classics) still receive sufficient support for inclusion in the current curricula.

Areas for improvement

- English is well positioned, but may find it productive to enter into arrangements (conferences, roundtables, workshops) with other language instruction within Tartu University, for mutual support and sustainability.
- German should promote itself thoughtfully and tirelessly, perhaps also building closer relations with German and Austrian cultural organizations, or with other German departments around Europe.
- Romance Languages need a clear, agreed, and measurable plan for enrolment consistency and stability. These should perhaps be discussed with the Dean for general agreement not only amongst the staff, but also the agreement and support of academic management.
- Classical Philology needs to define how it fits into what is largely a contemporary language programme, and how it intends to contribute to modern languages with its very different (and very valuable) focus on classical civilizations.

Recommendations

- For English, the staff's particular interest in the areas of cultural and literary theory (as mentioned by several staff members) seems worthy of development through additional research and elective opportunities.
- As mentioned above, German should promote itself thoughtfully and tirelessly, perhaps also building closer relations with German and Austrian cultural organizations, or with other German departments around Europe.
- Romance Languages should agree a programme-specific Action Plan with the Dean; the Dean should contribute to and moderate this Plan; and then all sides should try to implement it.
- Classical Philology also needs a specific Action Plan, to incorporate itself clearly and functionally into a structure that is largely based upon living languages. As mentioned above in relation to the Romance Languages, this Action Plan must be designed in consultation with, and under the moderation of, the Dean.

Resources

The resources for these programmes appear useable and appropriate. An immediate caveat must intrude here, however: during the visit of the team a huge amount of moving, restructuring, repair, repurposing, and simply unboxing was taking place. Thus, for example, it is almost impossible for the team to judge the book and journal resources properly, as so many of them were in boxes awaiting shelving. Similarly, the team entered rooms that were empty but for sawdust; rooms in which there was nothing at all except exposed electrical wiring; and rooms cluttered with materials from which to build new structures. The team recognizes that this is a transitional period, but wish to emphasize that these transitional conditions hampered a full resource assessment.

It is the general impression of the team that the facilities were adequate and appropriate, as far as we were able to assess them. For example, many rooms were unready for use or occupation; those that were, however, were adequate for their intended purposes. Analogously, although many of the books and journals for the language programmes were boxed or unavailable, the resources the team could see—or, more importantly, were able to consult during a tour of the main University library—were again what would be required for scholarship. The lecture hall in which they observed a class was well-provisioned, with adequate seating for a large group of students, a computer, a projector, and what appeared to be a sound system wired to the computer (the instructor was not, during the observed class, using the computer,

and so the connection between the speakers and the computer is speculative, but likely). Staff offices appeared appropriate and, although shared, adequate for multiple users. It is commendable that there is also a student recreation room, in which we noted that there is a multilingual 'book-trade' exchange, with various books available for students to take or borrow based simply on interest.

It is therefore the overall impression of the team that the language facilities and resources are adequate and appropriate to the curricula. It should be noted again, though, that it is the responsibility of Tartu University to assure that the building work still transpiring is brought to a swift and reasonable conclusion, and that the resultant spaces facilitate teaching, learning, scholarship, and consultation.

Strengths

- Premises seem adequate and are apparently being supported with substantial amounts of new investment for rebuilding, moving, or restructuring.
- Rooms and auditoria were—when available for inspection—up to the expected international standards.
- Rooms seemed flexible in terms of accommodating different sized groups and different teaching styles (i.e. lectures of 25+ students or seminars of 8-9 could reasonably be held in a number of rooms shown to the team).

Areas for improvement

- Much carpentry, repainting, and rewiring remains to be done.
- It will require a significant amount of new signage and clear instructions to orient the students and faculty visitors to the new organization/facilities.
- It was stated that the programme library will require a new librarian supported by students.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning seem to be the strongest elements in the areas of language study. The team had the opportunity to meet with students from numerous programmes and numerous levels of achievement (current and former students, students in the 1st cycle and 2nd cycle, students of both genders, and students of numerous language programmes). They were all impressive, expressive, and demonstrated a solid understanding of their programmes and of the logic behind the creation and apportionment of credits within their programmes. These facts speak to a strong series of programmes, and a transparency within the programmes in explaining their internal logic to the students.

The teaching in the English programme particularly was noted by the students, but it was the general consensus of students in the German, French, and Spanish programmes as well that the instructors are informed, responsive to student questions and communications, and provide adequate pedagogical support. In this context it is perhaps worthy of note that the French programme particularly was identified by their current and former students for having built a strong sense of connection and community amongst the students and staff. Staff members of these language programmes also expressed their general conviction that they provide modern and relevant instruction, and this assertion is consistent with the observations of the team.

It was not clear to the team how prior learning or work experience is directly incorporated into the curriculum and recognition of prior knowledge, except to note that it appears to be the case that different 'groups' are created to accommodate students who already have knowledge of their target language, and those who wish to begin their language study at Tartu University. This is good practice, but may be difficult to sustain in some of the smaller language programmes.

Strengths

- Teaching staff appear to be appropriate, and their methods and communications with students seem strong.
- Each programme seems to have a good mixture of language skills classes, cultural and historical surveys, and theoretical approaches. This variety makes for well-rounded curricula.
- French particularly seems to have a strong sense of intra-programme identity and solidarity—or so, at least, is the impression of their students.
- Tartu University seems to make significant efforts to accommodate both those students who specialize in language and have prior language facility, and those who wish to begin their language studies in their undergraduate programmes.

Areas for improvement

- As mentioned above, it is a concern of the team that having two groups (those with established language ability and those just beginning their study of the language) may be difficult to sustain for all programmes.
- The team is not certain how much sharing of good practice transpires amongst language programmes. It was the judgement of the team that many of the teachers had innovative and thoughtful approaches to their work, but it was not certain that

instructors from (say) German and Spanish had a regular and established forum for exchanging ideas or training one another.

- As mentioned in the section on Facilities (above), many of the resources upon which the instructors would likely draw were boxed, being moved, or were otherwise unavailable for assessment. The staff did not mention being notably hampered in their teaching by a lack of resources, but it should be noted that this component of teaching and learning—i.e., available material resources—was difficult to assess at this time.

Recommendations

- Each language programme should conduct a self-assessment exercise, perhaps in consultation with the Dean, to identify the costs and difficulties of maintaining the two-group approach to languages. It is a strength of these programmes that they can incorporate beginners and those with existing language skills in the target language, but this must be a sustainable policy based on anticipatory planning.
- It is advisable to establish a regular meeting—every month, twice a term, as is most appropriate for the staff schedules—in which members from different language programmes can meet to share good practice, raise questions and concerns, propose ideas, and perhaps engage in training sessions.

Teaching staff

The teaching staff of these programmes are impressive. They appear to be committed teachers and researchers, and gave clear indications of being highly motivated by their jobs. The students with whom the team met also paid tribute to the quality and approachability of their instructors. These discussions were held in conditions of guaranteed anonymity, yet none of the students raised concern about the quality of commitment of their instructors.

The team also had the opportunity to meet various levels of instructors, from relatively senior figures to relatively junior staff members, and the general impression felt by the team was one of collegiality without undue hierarchy.

The current staff seem entirely adequate to deliver the programmes as designed. It is the concern of the team, however, that in some of the smaller programmes an undue burden of teaching may fall upon a small number of staff. This may be particularly true of Classical Philology. Larger programmes, such as English, do not appear to face this dilemma.

In discussion with the teaching staff, it appeared that they have modern research interests and strive to publish their work in peer-reviewed and reputable journals. This is to be supported, particularly in an era of easy predatory publishing.

It was not clear to the team how much opportunity the teaching staff have for outgoing mobility opportunities. Although this can be logistically difficult for every institution, Tartu University is encouraged to support outgoing mobility for the staff of these language programmes particularly, given that the nature of the teachers' expertise makes them culturally and linguistically prepared to participate fully in the academic life of external institutions.

Where feasible, incoming mobility should also be encouraged. The nature of these language programmes makes them highly accessible to incoming mobility from foreign professors and students.

Strengths

- The teaching staff are committed and professional, with relevant research interests and determination to publish that work in reputable journals.
- The students have a strong sense of allegiance with their teachers, and believe that the instructors are responsive and professional.
- There exists a good atmosphere in these programmes, without needless intrusions of hierarchy separating junior from senior staff.

Areas for improvement

- It appears that external mobility would be developmentally useful for these language programmes and would provide the instructors with valuable opportunities to conduct research abroad and make additional professional contacts.
- Smaller language programmes may need to take care to assure that smaller numbers of teaching staff do not become overwhelmed with teaching responsibilities.
- As mentioned above, it would seem useful to create a clear and regular forum across the language programmes to allow sharing of good practice, raise concerns or questions, and offer internal training.

Recommendations

- Develop and support external mobility, and make processes for participating in such mobility opportunities open and transparent for all staff.
- Small programmes should honestly assess the ratio of their staff to teaching requirements, and raise concerns directly with the Dean, as appropriate.
- Create a regular forum for the sharing of good practice and the offering of internal training across the language programmes.

- Where possible, encourage incoming mobility of foreign academics with appropriate specializations.

Students

The students with whom the team met—either current students, or graduated alumni—were positive about their programmes and their experiences at the University of Tartu. They were articulate, informed about the programmes in which they participated (or had participated), and expressed positive willingness to recommend these programmes to others. We had the opportunity to meet with several students who had pursued both first and second cycle degrees at UT; the willingness to pursue a second cycle degree at one's previous university indicates a high level of satisfaction with the academic offering and the delivery of the programme.

Drop-out rates were higher than is desirable, yet it may be pertinent to note here that the team had the impression that a difficult pressure was felt in these programmes: that the tendency (or need) of students to obtain and hold external employment sometimes prevented them from achieving on-time graduation. This is more a social problem than a pedagogical one, but it should perhaps be the subject of cross-programme dialogue among the language programmes. This dialogue should investigate how students may be supported to maintain their expected academic course loads, even when holding or seeking outside employment. The language programmes should also be careful in monitoring students who may be in peril of withdrawing, even for a short time, and care be taken to encourage them to return when they are able.

The converse phenomenon to this circumstance is that employment seems to be high indeed. It appears that the demographic situation in Estonia makes it possible to obtain employment despite, in some cases, not having finished one's full degree programme. This strikes the team as unfortunate. It is not to be desired that a group of students should leave to obtain employment—based, perhaps, on the possession of strong language skills—without subsequently finishing their degrees. The language programmes are advised to consider carefully how students who might be considered inactive or withdrawn may be attracted back into their programmes, with incentives such as part-time study, reduced course loads, intensive but brief modular instruction, or extended graduation deadlines.

In a related observation, however, it must be acknowledged that the alumni with whom the team met expressed strong satisfaction with the skills they developed in their language programmes at UT, and stated that their employers shared this perception. The team did not have an opportunity to speak directly with employers.

Strengths

- These programmes have good, motivated, articulate students and satisfied alumni.
- Language skills appear to be developed to such a satisfactory extent that students can obtain employment using them, even without finishing their degrees.
- Some students choose to pursue their advanced degrees within the same programme, indicating appreciation for the delivery of their initial undergraduate programme.

Areas for improvement

- Drop-outs and late graduation appear to be problematic, based largely upon the need or desire for employment.
- It is unclear how effective monitoring mechanisms are in detecting potential student withdrawals from the language programmes, and what support strategies and inducements they are offered.

Recommendations

- Establish careful monitoring and support systems to identify and assist students who may desire or need to withdraw, and encourage them to return as quickly as possible.
- Devise alternative learning policies (part-time study, reduced course loads, extended graduation deadlines) to attract students back into programmes in which they are inactive.
- Perhaps establish a working-group to contact employers and other external stakeholders and, with them, assess what skills and abilities are most needed in the local labour market. This discussion may enable both the University and the business community at large to increase the value, and the public perception of the value, of a completed degree.

3.3.2 Russian and Slavic Languages and Literatures (BA); Slavic Studies (MA)

Study programme and study programme development

The aims of the Russian and Slavic Philology programme (BA) include the following areas of philological competences: the Russian language, linguistics, Russian literature and literary theory, and Russian culture. Thus, the programme aims at providing fundamentals in linguistics and literary theory, developing communication abilities in Russian (C1), understanding Russian culture and the ability to analyse and evaluate the phenomena of

Russian language and literature in a broader linguistic and literary context, as well as the abilities of critical thinking, independent learning, communication and cooperation in a multicultural environment.

An advantage of this programme is that it ensures unity of research and studies and provides fundamental education in humanities via the interdisciplinary approach to studies. Equal attention in the programme is devoted to language and linguistics, literature and literary theory, and knowledge of Russian culture. It is supplemented by the study of other Slavonic languages and cultures, such as Polish and Czech.

The Slavic Studies (MA) programme deepens the knowledge of Russian, Polish, and Czech languages, their cultural contexts and literatures; prepares students for independent research work and a continuation of their studies at doctoral level. It also offers a study option for those who wish to pursue a teaching career (120 ECTS of pedagogy and education studies should be chosen by those who wish to obtain a Master's degree in Teaching Russian language and literature in upper secondary school).

Strengths

- Both programmes are flexible and allow students to individualise and diversify their studies according to their interests and abilities.
- Both programmes are student-oriented and develop the competences necessary for the student in order to meet the needs of social and personal development, the labour market, and help the students to acquire competences compatible with their bachelor's degree. They also prepare the students for further studies or work in a certain area (MA programme).
- The team found that responsibilities for decisions and the monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated and that information on its implementation is regularly collected and analysed.
- Both programmes are well incorporated into the general curriculum structure of the College of World Languages and Cultures, and lecturers from Russian and Slavic Languages and Literatures (BA) and Slavic Studies (MA) regularly contribute to the delivery of interdisciplinary and inter-cultural lectures.
- The team's discussions with staff and students revealed an atmosphere of close cooperation between colleagues and a lively academic community, in which students are well supported.
- Both programmes have a varied and diverse student body (students from Russia, Latvia, Kazakhstan as well as students from Estonia).

Areas for improvement

- According to the Self-Evaluation Report, “the degree awarded at the Bachelor’s level should also be relevant to the labour market at an appropriate level of qualification” (p.13), but the team did not find any consistent and clear evidence of market needs analysis, employer feedback, or incorporation of practice into the BA programme in particular. The level of qualification offered is of high value, but it is not closely linked with future employment opportunities. There are some good examples of “links with the outside world” (working in the editing office of a newspaper as part of the module, voluntary work, freelance work), but this is mostly done on an ad hoc basis or by students in their spare time. The team noted that this problem is common across all language groups within the College of World Languages and Cultures.
- Although there is a university wide compulsory on-line student feedback on subject courses, there seems to be no formally established system of informing students about its results analysis and any changes implemented.
- The international student body diversity offers an excellent marketing opportunity for the department, which seems to be under-utilised at the moment.

Recommendations

- While student numbers are still fairly healthy there has been a drop in recent years. There were 73 enrolled on the BA in 2012 yet in 2015 there are only 48. Numbers on the MA programme over the same period have also dropped, from 26 to 16. Clearly the reasons for these drops must be analysed and solutions sought. The trend is worrying and attempts must be made to understand the decline and to seek ways of reversing it.
- In the light of the university’s aim to increase practice/placements in companies while studying at all levels (discussed during the meeting with the Vice Rector for Academic affairs), it might be advisable to consider an introduction, where appropriate, of a practical credit bearing element into existing modules within the BA curriculum (e.g. a practice in an editing office, teacher observation, or shadowing museum curators, translators, etc.). This would also facilitate regular feedback from prospective employers and the analysis of market needs.
- To ensure a formal follow-up process on students’ feedback we recommend an implementation of a Staff/Student Liaison Committee, which could meet once per semester to discuss any matters arising from student feedback.

Resources

During the meeting with students it was revealed that they felt that university and department facilities exceeded their expectations.

Strengths

- The TU library has a wide variety of materials for Russian and Slavonic studies, including electronic resources and databases. There is open access to publications in Russian (literary theory, folklore, linguistics, dictionaries, reference books, encyclopaedias, periodicals in the field of philology), including many fundamental and modern works in Russian Studies. Both students and teachers can use databases subscribed to by the TU Library. Overall, the students were very complimentary about the teaching and learning facilities at the University.
- The embassy of the Russian Federation in Estonia provides the Department with journals and books in Russian.
- The faculty provides facilities for individual study and group work and a new student lounge was recently opened, where students can rest, read and have a snack.
- Although the premises were inspected during a period of department's relocation and many teaching rooms were in the process of renovation, the team did not detect any major problems concerning teaching spaces and staff accommodation. There were some comments made by members of staff concerning the reduction of the overall space occupied by the departmental staff offices, however, it was strongly felt that the benefits of moving to the renovated premises together with other languages will benefit the development and maintenance of the Russian/Slavonic programmes and outweigh temporary distractions and inconveniences.
- There is good provision for students with disabilities, for example, access for wheelchairs, lifts, stair-lifts. Each department has a student advisor, who deals with support services. Students with special needs are encouraged to contact these advisors in order to obtain the necessary help and support. There is also a group of Support Students Volunteers, who help other students with special needs. The University Library offers support for the visually impaired (e.g. a special reading programme JAWS and TV reader that enlarges text by up to 46 times). During the meeting with students the Team learned, that blind students have the help of note takers during lectures and seminars and are also provided with audio and digitally recorded study materials.

Area for improvement

- Although the University strives to provide support for students with special needs, there seems to be no centralised formal system for its implementation. Currently it is limited to a request that all students with special needs inform student advisors of the study department that deals with support services.

Recommendation

- The team felt that a university-wide scheme of Student Enabling Centres could be considered. Such Centres might be established in each faculty and staffed with professionally trained note takers for visually and hearing impaired students. Also, interpreters for deaf students and note takers for students with dyslexia could be a possibility. These Centres could monitor student enrolment information and compile the necessary data for each faculty. This could then be communicated to special needs advisors within various departments. Members of staff could be informed about the students enrolled on their courses, who require special arrangements.

Teaching and learning

The names of the programmes (Russian and Slavic Philology and Slavic Studies) are compatible with the name of the field of study and its learning outcomes, which include Slavic languages, linguistics, literature, culture, and history knowledge of Russia at different levels. The content of modules/subjects of the programmes develops gradually at different stages of studies. After closely analysing the curriculum design and during discussions with staff and students, the team noted that there is clear evidence of logical incremental progression of modules/subjects content from level to level. This corresponds well with planned learning outcomes.

Strengths

- Both programmes are flexible and student-oriented. It helps students of different programmes to combine their major and minor studies and suit their personal needs. This was strongly emphasised during the meeting with students.
- Clear evidence of strong research profile of staff feeding into teaching.
- The discussions with teaching staff and students indicated that the renewed study plans, after restructuring, are working well. Many courses for different languages have been merged to form interdisciplinary modules taught either in Estonian or English and are open for all language students (e.g. Literary Theory with comparative elements instead of Russian literary theory, etc.). The broad and interdisciplinary character of the programmes is commendable.
- The team found that there is a variety of teaching methods, even if lecture and seminar format forms the basis of teaching. Students commented favourably on the

structure of lectures within BA and MA courses. They emphasised the importance of discussions during lectures and seminars, which teach them to be critical thinkers and to see their subjects in a wider humanities context. Skype talks with Russian writers and practical experience of working in an editing office were particularly praised.

- We also found a variety of assessment methods, although most courses rely on some combination of short or long essays, exams, presentations (single or group) and general seminar participation. Quick return of assessed work and an open and friendly atmosphere for results discussions with staff were cited by students several times as good examples of assessment practice within the department.
- During the meeting with teaching staff we found that they have a great deal of autonomy in how they design, teach and assess their courses.
- Transferable skills are well exemplified through the curriculum. In our discussion with students the team found that they were very good at articulating the transferable skills that they had learned in studying Russian and Slavic Philology (e.g. team work, IT skills, project management, time management, self-development).

Areas for improvement

- Although the restructured Russian and Slavic Languages and Literatures programme seems to be working well, and interdisciplinary modules enabled greater cooperation between departments and widened the curriculum, the discussions with teaching staff and students indicated that the restructured study programme reduced the number of subject specific philological modules and moved some of the modules out of the Philology programme (e.g. Corrective Russian).
- Although the subjects given in the MA programmes cover a wide range of topics within the field of Russian and Slavonic philology, it was a little puzzling to discover that there are no modules on topics such as sociolinguistics, language policy, and multilingualism, particularly, taking into account the constantly changing functions of Russian Language in post-Soviet space and in the world.
- During our meeting with students we detected some concerns related to the increased number of self-study hours. Students felt that revisions in the study plan involved, along with reductions in the number of contact hours for specific philological subjects, increased the number of hours for students' independent work. This, in our opinion, created a problem with monitoring students' self-studies. At present, the problem is usually solved on an individual basis. It works due to a comparatively small number of students and the overwork of a devoted teaching staff.

- From our discussions with staff and students it transpired that the assessment system and methods are chosen by teachers in accordance with anticipated learning outcomes and are objective. None of the students could recall a case when he/she had been assessed subjectively. However, there does not seem to be a formal system in place which ensures the objectivity of assessments either within or across the departments.
- Although all members of staff use the Study Information System, which is linked to MOODLE, only some of them use MOODLE as an e-learning environment for their courses.

Recommendations

- The Team feels that a very careful approach to subject specific changes should be exercised in any future major programme restructuring in order to avoid the dilution of the subject.
- It might be beneficial to consider the inclusion of socio-political elements analysing the position of Russian in the modern globalised world and its changing functions in post-Soviet space into existing courses, where possible.
- It may be suggested that a system to monitor and assess students' self-study during the semester could be implemented. It is particularly important for students of junior years.
- The team suggests that a unified transparent system of assessment feedback should be discussed and implemented. It could be modelled on the moderation and double marking system used in many European universities, which aims to provide transparent and objective feedback by ensuring that all written and oral assignments awarded top and fail grades are marked by a second tutor. A further 10% sample of other grades is also marked by a second tutor. In the case of significant discrepancies between the marks by different tutors, the results are moderated. Assessment criteria should be clearly stated not only in course descriptions, but also on feedback sheets for all assignments. These should be comparable across all languages taught at the College. The whole process should be formally documented. The form of moderation sheets and procedures could be established internally. The Team suggests that the College could run a pilot moderation project and then forward it to Senior Management for university-wide discussion.
- It may be suggested that an e-learning strategy should be implemented to ensure a transparent and uniform use of an e-learning platform by all members of staff on various courses.

Teaching staff

Strengths

- The members of the academic staff implementing the BA and MA study programmes are highly qualified. Almost all members of the department have PhDs or are studying towards one. The College overall has three full professors, one of them in Russian literature and one professor emerita in Russian language.
- Almost all members of academic staff are involved in research activities on national and international levels. Department of Russian and Slavic Studies is particularly active and successful in securing research grants.
- The staff members are very dedicated to their programme and teachers are highly motivated. They had hardly any problems with the teaching environment other than job security in the current climate of restructuring. They spoke very highly of their programme and felt responsible towards their students.
- During the meeting with staff the team received good evidence of staff involvement in academic mobility, for example, teaching in partner institutions, research visits, national and international conference attendance.
- ERASMUS and other visiting lecturers from partner institutions are well integrated into the teaching process (current lecturer in Polish was highly praised by students).
- Student feedback on teaching quality is consistently high. During our meeting with students, we learned that staff are very helpful, highly professional, passionate about their subjects, and approachable.
- Staff development is supported by central administrative units (there is a webpage on the university-wide training and professional development). Several members of the group we met took the opportunity to attend various courses advertised on the intranet.

Areas for improvement

- Although there are clearly very good examples of teaching practices within the department, there is no formal system of peer observation. Peer-review of teaching was piloted by the university in 2014-15, but we did not receive any clear indications on whether this was successful or useful for the department and the College.
- There was some uncertainty expressed regarding staff appraisal. Until 2015 all staff were on a five year contract and their performance was reviewed at the end of the contract. However, with the current changes in the University structure and the

movement towards a system of permanent contracts, it is not clear, how staff performance and needs are going to be assessed.

Recommendations

- We feel that a formal and regular peer observation system might contribute to the practice of sharing the best teaching, assessment, and research developments between the different departments.
- It might be advisable to introduce an internal annual staff appraisal scheme in order to assess lecturers' needs and achievements.

Students

Strengths

- The students we met were highly motivated and satisfied with the programmes.
- They were very complimentary about their learning environment and resources.
- There is varied international student body and clear evidence of student learning mobility.
- Excellent command of Russian and English.
- Active participation in various student committees (within the department and university-wide).

Area for improvement

Students desire to have more practically oriented elements within the modules on the BA programme and better management of self-study hours.

- From discussions with staff and students the Team found that although the drop-out rate for the BA programme is not very high, it mostly occurs during the first year of study due to the wrong choice of programme or personal and financial reasons. The drop-out problem is also common in the third year and is usually related to the non-completion of the final thesis (BA).

Recommendations

- It might be advisable to consider an introduction, where appropriate, of a practical credit bearing element into existing modules within the BA curriculum.

- A system of monitoring and assessing students' self-study work might be useful.
- In order to diminish early drop-out rates we suggest that, on the one hand, a School Outreach Scheme might be considered to organise talks at schools (conducted by staff and students) to increase awareness of the programme content amongst school leavers; and, on the other hand, a Personal Tutor system (similar to the one used in many European universities) might be established for first year students, where each member of academic staff has a small group of first year students allocated to them and conducts regular meetings with their tutees to monitor their problems and progress. It is also suggested that in the future the choice of the final thesis topics might be extended to incorporate students' practical experience in companies. This might lead to a higher completion rate of theses and lower drop-out rate in the final year of the BA studies.
- We also recommend that international students/alumni links are created for the College's web-space on the University website to illustrate its commitment to internationalisation and to promote further intake of international students (i.e. current international students' profiles, video interviews, etc.) The team felt that this is particularly important in the light of new developments at the university. As it was emphasised during our meeting with the Vice Rector, the university aims to attract larger numbers of the best foreign students. The Faculty already has excellent experience, and this practice should be shared with other faculties.

3.3.3 Translation Studies (MA)

Study programme and study programme development

There have been considerable changes in the last two years. Teachers and students were pleased with the changes (greater focus on transferable skills) and the possibilities of having MA projects (instead of a thesis, which was considered rather challenging). More changes are expected in the academic year 2015-2016 in the curriculum and courses.

Interpretation has been introduced rather recently in the programme of Translation Studies.

Russian, language of the neighbouring country, is one of the working languages in interpreting Russian is also in Euroacademy but for translation; there is no Russian at Tallinn University in the translation/interpreting programme.

Community interpreting was introduced in the curriculum of conference interpreting which is part of the UT programme.

The tools for translation are appropriate (CAT, Memo Q).

Strength

- Internship is well organised. The duration of the internship is 6 weeks. A supervisor is assigned for the students. The students have the opportunity to search for an internship place or they can be supported by the UT (it was pointed out that it is more difficult to find an internship place in interpreting). The majority of students run their internship at translation agencies and only a small number are internees at public institutions or EC. The students have to submit a portfolio by the end of the internship which contains information about the work, acquired skills, assessment from employers and impact of internship. Some students get employed upon graduation by the translation agencies where they had performed their internship.

Area for improvement

- The updating of the curriculum in translation needs to be done regularly on the basis of data collected from different stakeholders.

Recommendations

- The learning outcomes need to be more specific for each course/module, so students are aware of what they are expected to learn and how.
- More systematic cooperation with employers is needed in order to update the curriculum in translation.
- The programme of comparative literature is very successful; the translation programme could offer courses on translation for the students of literature so they become aware of the impact of translation in the development of literatures. More synergy is needed between the two.

Resources

The library has large spaces for reading, working in small groups: it allows direct access to books and journals; it has convenient opening hours. In the premises of the Department, we did not see any computer rooms intended for translation use (students were using their own laptops).

The University has also rooms equipped with booths for simultaneous interpreting.

Strength

- The experts were impressed by the library (working hours, working places, services, etc.)

Areas for improvement

- There is a very limited number of publications on translation.
- Participation in conferences is not extensive.

Recommendation

- The teaching staff is encouraged to participate in conferences in translation/interpreting and publish more in this field and involve the students as well.

Teaching and learning

Strengths

- Internships which offer a perspective on the future jobs of the students, open their eyes on the current practices and competences.
- The possibility of student mobility – internship and mobility are key elements in the training of translators, future mediators between experts and between cultures, aware of the challenges of international and intercultural communication.
- Good numbers of Erasmus agreements and partnerships were established with foreign universities (Germany, for instance).

Areas for improvement

- Evaluation procedures and criteria of competences to be acquired (the focus seems too much on the final translation output and not enough on the learning process).
- Students need to be explained more clearly both in the curriculum and before the beginning of the course why only legal, economic and technical translations have been selected.
- The need to increase the number of international partners.
- Providing community interpreting courses presents some risk, as the market is not yet regulated.

Recommendations

- Make explicit the links between competences, learning outcomes and evaluation criteria in the description of each course

- Seek to increase the number of international partners, both for training translators and developing research projects.

Teaching staff

Teachers are qualified and dedicated, even the part-time teachers (professional, visiting staff). However, many teachers are nearing retirement age and this obviously presents a risk for the sustainability of the programme.

Strengths

- The Ratio of teachers to students is very good (this year, there are 4 full-time teachers and 15 newly admitted students): small groups facilitate team works and innovation in pedagogy.
- Teaching staff with good work experience

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' self-development opportunities should be scaled-up
- The few classes that the team attended suggest that teaching competences still need to be improved and that teachers use more interactive methods

Recommendations

- Teachers should have more opportunities for further development; use new digital tools, online courses.
- Lecturers should be encouraged to pursue and complete their doctoral studies.
- Staff should in future be recruited on the basis of their research and teaching competences.
- The list of references for further reading should be appropriate and accessible in the languages the students speak
- There should be some formal requirements to ensure teachers' development of pedagogical skills
- The assessment procedures and criteria should be adjusted, so students are sure to acquire certain competences in given courses.

Students

The total number is quite small, and may represent a risk for the survival of the programme. The team could notice that the number of attending students was indeed low, in the classes that were visited, especially during a simultaneous interpreting class.

Strengths

- Recognition of previous work as internship: this validation of working experience can shorten the length of the studies.
- Good connections with the labour market representatives although more could be done in this area to update the curricula: employability must go in pair with the development of the jobs, the emergence of new competences, the integration of e-tools.
- There are courses and presentations related to career development, so students become acquainted with the job market and its requirements.
- Supervision of students is appropriate, helping them to progress in their studies

Areas for improvement

- Students requested lengthier studies and internships. Longer studies will not improve necessarily students' competences. But longer internship could give them more opportunities to notice the diversity of the competences required from a translator, the impact of technology on productivity, factors of changes in the profession.
- The student numbers are low, putting the programme at risk, with too many teachers for too few students, with less group dynamics in the training, with less possibilities to offer various specialisations.

Recommendations

- The University should consider launching a campaign to recruit more students in this area.
- With regard to students, the Faculty should aim for an international education market to recruit students from abroad, by making its programme more attractive for foreign students and providing them with the appropriate skills to succeed on the international level.

3.3.4. Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics (BA, MA)

Study programme and study programme development

The Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics BA and MA programmes are one of the most notable ones in its field internationally. It is of considerable national importance. The programmes notably trains teachers of Estonian, both mother tongue teachers and Estonian as second language teachers, as well as language professionals who work in different

positions in language planning, editing, public relations, communication, or the like. Thus, the programmes is of great relevance to the society.

Teaching Estonian as a second language is of particular importance given that a considerable percentage of the population are non-native speakers. The increasing number of immigrants adds to the importance of Estonian as a second language education. Educated individuals with a high proficiency of Finnish are also necessary in many areas of the country, and in international business. The programmes have been essentially unaffected by the recent reorganisation of language programmes within the university. However, the Estonian as a second language in the BA programme has previously been directed to students who are non-native speakers of Estonian themselves, but has recently been reformatted in such a way that it also serves students who are native speakers of Estonian who wish to specialise in Estonian as a second language.

The programmes also have a strong research profile which is of a high international quality. The University of Tartu is not only the single most important university-level research site of the Estonian language in the world, but also one of the main centres of Finno-Ugric studies worldwide.

Strengths

- The programmes have an international profile: several members of the teaching staff are from other countries, there are plenty of foreign students, and both students and staff members actively participate in exchange programmes. Many of the staff members are internationally networked researchers who publish in high-quality environments.
- Graduates of the programmes have comparably good employment prospects.
- The programmes provide a fruitful working environment for scholars of different Finno-Ugric languages. There is good collaboration within the programmes in both teaching and research.
- The University of Tartu offers specialities not available elsewhere in Estonia, e.g. computational linguistics.

Area for improvement

- A major challenge is attracting new students who wish to become teachers. The root of this problem is the salary level of teachers, but the prestige of the teacher's profession should be increased.

Recommendation

- Co-operation between universities, especially with Tallinn University, should be increased. With dropping student numbers, co-operation could enable students of both universities to have a wider variety of specialties than either university alone could provide.

Resources

The institute has recently moved to a new building which provides the staff and the students with a better working environment while cutting down costs. The new facilities are well suited for the needs of the department. Services such as libraries, equipment, network resources, etc. also seem quite adequate, and both students and staff members seem satisfied with the present situation.

Strengths

- The programmes have three appointed national professorships which have improved the financial stability of the programme.
- Both students and teachers seem very satisfied with the teaching environment, offices, equipment, library services, databases, and the like.
- Staff members have had good opportunities to attend international conferences.

Areas for improvement

- Staff members were not entirely confident of their employment in the future due to restructuring within the university.
- Research funding and research-related expenses such as participation in conferences, depends on external project funding which is subject to increasing competition.
- We note here the general problem of faculty salaries not being sufficiently competitive in the employment market. However, addressing this problem is possible only in a larger context, so we cannot offer a particular recommendation.

Teaching and learning

The programmes give the impression of being well thought out. The students and the staff members know what they are doing and what they are expected to do, and good practices concerning student participation in curriculum planning, course feedback, and the like, have been implemented.

Strengths

- Teaching Estonian as a second language has previously been directed specifically for non-native speakers. Recently, the BA programme has been reorganised in such a way that it also invited native speakers of Estonian who wish to specialise in Estonian as a second language. The team sees this as a positive development which reflects the current needs of the society.
- There are good practices concerning course feedback. All students must give written feedback on a certain amount of courses, and the feedback is analysed and taken into account in curriculum planning. Course feedback is transparent, and students have access to previous feedback given on courses.
- Small teaching groups make it possible to tailor courses according to the needs of the students. For instance, in courses of Estonian as a second language and of Finnish, the students may express their wishes as to what themes they would like to be covered on the course, and thereby have an opportunity to direct their language learning to areas relevant to their particular needs.

Area for improvement

- Studies in Estonian as a second language have not yet been able to attract many native speakers as students. There seems to be an underlying problem whereby Estonian as a second language is seen as a field specific to Russian-speaking Estonians.

Recommendation

- Improve advertising studying Estonian as a second language for native speakers of Estonian in schools, in social media, etc.

Teaching staff

Several members of the teaching staff show remarkable research activity. The teachers are well qualified, and most are highly experienced as university teachers. The students of the

programmes seemed happy and even impressed by their teachers. There seem to be no major issues in this area. However, some concern was raised with regard to the heavy responsibility given to the lecturers of Finnish and Hungarian due to the lack of teaching staff in these disciplines.

Strengths

- The teaching staff consists of experienced teachers and highly qualified scholars. Staff members seem well motivated and committed to their work.
- Many members of the teaching staff are active researchers at the international level and publish their work in high-quality environments.
- The faculty is committed to teaching and to the students, and the students seem satisfied with their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The programmes previously had a visiting professor of Finnish. At the moment, there are no positions of full professor of Finnish in Estonia. The university has applied for CIMO funding for this purpose, but the applications have not been successful.
- There is also no professor of Hungarian. Therefore, the lecturers of Finnish and Hungarian have a major responsibility of the curriculum and teaching load of these languages.
- There seems not to be systematic practices for assessing and improving teaching methodology.

Recommendations

- Different options for recruiting professor-level scholars of Finnish and Hungarian should be considered. External funding from Finland or Hungary is uncertain at best, and does not provide continuity.
- Those staff members who do not yet have a doctoral degree should be encouraged to participate in research activities and pursue doctoral studies.

Students

The students of the programme gave an impression of genuine enthusiasm and solid motivation. The programme have been able to attract not only a sufficient number of students, despite challenging demographic trends and increasing interdisciplinary competition for potential students, but also a respectable number of very skilled and motivated students. While the current situation is good, attention should be paid to

recruiting new students in the future in order to ensure a sufficient number of students and, more crucially, graduating experts for the needs of the society.

Strengths

- The students seem highly motivated and satisfied with their studies.
- The programmes have actively marketed itself to potential students in schools around Estonia.
- Linguistically oriented competitions aimed for high school students are organised. They increase the awareness about the programmes among potential future students.
- The programmes employs good practices in student tutoring, including trained student tutors and an induction week at the beginning of BA studies. Students found these very useful.

Areas for improvement

- There has been significant variation in the number of admitted students in recent years, and the trend is towards smaller numbers. Attracting enough new students is a crucial challenge, though one shared by practically all disciplines due to the overall demographic development.
- A specific challenge is attracting native speakers of Estonian to specialise in Estonian as a second language.

Recommendation

- Attracting new students is a challenge for most disciplines in the future. The programmes should increase visibility outside the university, and make the content of the studies more accessible to potential future students.

3.3.5. Literature and Cultural Research (BA); Literature and Theatre Research (MA)

Study programme and study programme development

These programmes represent some of the most wide-ranging and ambitious academic programmes reviewed by this team. They combine specific regional foci (such as folklore and ethnology) with subject matter accessible to the entire academic world (such as theatre practice and theory). It is a testimony to the effectiveness of the delivery of these broad-

based programmes that the students and alumni with whom the team consulted all praised the breadth of the curriculum, and the depth of the academic offering.

It is also worth observing that the academic staff expressed repeated and personal support for both the programmes specifically, and for the structure of the curricula in general terms. They asserted that they had been consulted about recent developments, and expressed satisfaction that their programmes continued to be popular and supported. It should be recorded, however, that there was some concern expressed to the team that the full international scope of these programmes was perhaps not fully understood at an institutional level by UT. The team feels that this is an important point to emphasize, particularly as elements of these programmes—notable primarily in the elective offerings—provide wonderful cultural opportunities to attract external students or incoming mobility students.

Strengths

- Strong academic offerings with diverse and flexible course choice.
- Reasonable and clear opportunities for ‘minor’ specialization.
- Students praised the close relations and support provided by the instructors.
- Graduates felt highly qualified to enter either professional employment or graduate education (either at Tartu, elsewhere in Estonia, or abroad).

Recommendation

- Ensure the future sustainability of the programme and stress the values of the programme to those in charge.

Resources

The facilities shown to the team were entirely appropriate for teaching and learning on these programmes. Although it is true that there are numerous changes taking place in UT—rooms being modified or changed, libraries being reshelfed or rehoused—it is the general impression of the team that the basic physical resources available to the staff and students are adequate to all expected and reasonable academic requirements.

Strengths

- Good facilities and good library resources.
- Several rooms looked particularly appropriate for performance practice and scholarship.

- A good division between programme-specific resources (housed on site) and institutional support (in the main University library) relevant to these programmes.

Teaching and learning

These criteria—teaching and learning—appear to be distinguishing characteristics of these programmes. Both staff and students testified to the attractiveness of the academic offer, and to the extensive skills built by the programmes. Indeed, two graduates of these programmes gave concrete examples of this success: one mentioned that she went on mobility to the Netherlands, and knew more than her colleagues there; and another mentioned that this programme taught her ‘how to study alone.’ These are significant achievements, both in promoting subject-specific knowledge, and the general acquisition of learning skills.

Strengths

- Strong curricula considered by the students to be varied and deep.
- Teaching that promotes individual learning strategies.
- Attractive regional subject matter that may promote incoming mobility.

Areas for improvement

- It is unclear how well external mobility offerings are integrated into the main transcript of UT students. Learning agreements must be clear and specific before any student of these programmes goes on mobility.
- Several students suggested that their ‘practical’ experiences (internships) arose largely through their own efforts. It would perhaps be useful to structure this with greater coordination through the programme management.

Recommendations

- Promote mobility opportunities for UT students on these programmes, but make certain that clear and precise learning agreements assure the applicability of the external credits to the UT academic programme.
- Establish more clear and formal structures to place and promote ‘practical’ internship opportunities for the students of these programmes.

Teaching staff

The staff of these programmes are well qualified. Many of them seem to be relatively young, so that there is good sustainability to be anticipated for these programmes. It should be noted that they feel pressure to publish in English, even in circumstances where the natural language of scholarship may be Estonian or another Baltic language.

Despite the fact that there are significant changes being anticipated, the staff seem well-briefed and engaged in the processes and debates that are being undertaken regarding curriculum and development.

Strengths

- Good, diverse, and young staff.
- Strong communication amongst teaching staff and programme managers.
- Adaptable and flexible academic staff.

Area for improvement

- Staff felt concern that journals with impact are often not journals that cover the fields most closely studied by the staff on these programmes.

Recommendation

- Assessment of staff publication and research should take into account the appropriate subject matter and language of publication, specifically in cases when the material may be most appropriate for Estonian language journals.

Students

The students of these programmes were among the most articulate and persuasive of all those with whom the team consulted. They expressed satisfaction with their programmes, and (in several cases) gave personal anecdotes about finding their employment, and developing their academic portfolios whilst students. The students who had graduated expressed their belief that the skills the programmes had developed were applicable in the labour market (specifically, writing, critical thinking, and engaged reading). They also suggested that they remain in contact with their former instructors.

Strengths

- Strong, multilingual students with a demonstrated commitment to their study programmes.
- Alumni have informal meetings with current students.
- There appears to be a strong continuity between first and second cycle enrolments.

Areas for improvement

- As mentioned above, internship seems to be relatively self-locating; a more formal process would likely make this a more effective process.
- It is unclear exactly how the graduates work within their fields—some do have employment directly in their fields of expertise, but others seem to have obtained employment via related skills.

Recommendations

- A formal process of selecting and promoting student internships should be undertaken at programme level.
- It would be valuable to conduct programme-specific reviews of graduates to establish where the graduates are employed, how they obtained those positions, and what might be done to the curricula to promote those skills in the labour market.