

Health Care Study Programme Group assessment decision University of Tartu

11/11/2016

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to approve the report of the Assessment Committee and to carry out the next quality assessment of the first and second levels of higher education of the Health Care Study Programme Group of the University of Tartu in five (5) years.

Pursuant to clause 41 of the document "Quality Assessment of the Study Programme Group at the First and Second Levels of Higher Education" established on the basis of the authorization contained in § 10 (4) of the University Act and clauses 3.8.3 and 3.8.1 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter the Council) states the following:

1. The University of Tartu coordinated the quality assessment period of the study programme group with EKKA on 30.04.2015.
2. The Director of EKKA approved by order of 20.02.2016 the quality assessment committee (hereinafter Committee) for the first and second levels of higher education of the Health Care Study Programme Group of Tartu Health Care College, Tallinn Health Care College and the University of Tartu and the Medicine Study Programme Group of Tallinn Health Care College, in the following composition:

Carol Lynn Cox (Chair)	Professor Emeritus, School of Health Sciences, City University, London, United Kingdom; Chief Nurse and Clinical Manager of the Health and Hope Clinics, Pensacola, Florida, USA
Pia Ahonen	Head of Education and Research, Faculty of Health and Wellbeing, Turku University of Applied Sciences – Finland
Lars Bohlin	Professor Emeritus, Department of Pharmacognosy,

	University of Uppsala – Sweden
Lesley Dawson	Freelance Consultant in Healthcare Training and Education – United Kingdom
Gunta Krūmiņa	Professor, Head of Department of Optometry and Vision Science, Faculty of Physics and Mathematics, University of Latvia – Latvia
Ewen McColl	Director of Clinical Dentistry, Peninsula Dental School, Plymouth University – United Kingdom
Hannele Turunen	Professor, Head of Department of Nursing Science, University of Eastern Finland – Finland
Margus Viigimaa	Professor, Director of the Institute of Cardiovascular Medicine, Tallinn University of Technology; Head of the Centre of Cardiology, North Estonia Medical Centre – Estonia
Samin Sedghi Zadeh	Student; Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Turin – Italy

3. The University of Tartu submitted the following study programmes for assessment in the Health Care Study Programme Group:
Physiotherapy (Bachelor's study)
Physiotherapy (Master's study)
Public Health (Master's study)
Nursing Science (Master's study)
4. The University of Tartu submitted a self-analysis report to the EKKA office on 15.02.2016, which was sent to the Committee by the assessment coordinator on 25.02.2016.
5. The assessment visit to the University of Tartu took place on 22.04.2016.–4.12.2019.
6. The Committee sent the draft assessment report to the EKKA office on 28.06.2016, which EKKA forwarded to the institution of higher education for comment on 9.07.2016 and to which the University of Tartu submitted a reply on 29.08.2016.
7. The Committee submitted the final assessment report to the EKKA office on 14.09.2016. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision. The report is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Assessment Council forwarded the final assessment report and self-analysis report to the members of the Assessment Council on 20.10.2016.
9. The Council discussed the received documents at the meeting of 11.11.2016 with the participation of nine members and decided to highlight the following strengths, recommendations, and areas for improvement concerning the first and second levels of higher education of the Health Care Study Programme Group of the University of Tartu.

Study programme group level

Strengths

- 1) The learning environment is completely modern and attractive.
- 2) Simulation equipment and well-equipped laboratories offer excellent opportunities for developing practical skills.
- 3) The study materials are of an excellent standard; the library offers a wide selection of modern study and research literature.
- 4) The implementation of study programmes is supported by international scientific cooperation. Lecturers participate in national and international research projects, which also involve students. Lecturers publish high-level publications.
- 5) Student counselling functions well.
- 6) The cooperation partners are satisfied with the content of the study programmes and the professional competence of the graduates.
- 7) All students in the study programme are guaranteed very good clinical internships placements with a suitable supervision system.
- 8) The study process is supported by a good level of IT solutions

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) In order to ensure equal treatment of students and to provide them with the highest possible quality of feedback on their academic and clinical progress, external evaluators should be involved in the student assessment process.
- 2) Study programmes should be reviewed to reduce subject overlaps.
- 3) The development and implementation of a Master's program in midwifery could be considered.
- 4) It is recommended to expand the possibilities of clinical practice to students and to train more practice supervisors.
- 5) Measures should be taken to increase student mobility and reduce drop-out rates.
- 6) More attention should be paid to ensuring the succession of teaching staff. The current promotion system would need to be reviewed and clear career opportunities created for the lecturers.
- 7) It must be ensured that the distribution of the workload of lecturers enables them to devote sufficient time not only to teaching but also to obtaining a doctoral degree and conducting research. There should be more lecturers with a doctoral degree.

Study programme level

NURSING SCIENCE (MASTER'S STUDY)

Strengths

- 1) The study programme is in accordance with the principles of the document "Estonian Nursing and Midwifery Development Strategy 2011-2020".
- 2) There is good cooperation with all important stakeholders in study programme development.
- 3) The interests of students are flexibly taken into account when conducting studies. Student-centered methods and flexible individual study plans are used in teaching.

- 4) Assessment of learning outcomes is transparent and objective.
- 5) International lecturers are periodically involved in the study process.
- 6) Employers are satisfied with graduates' competencies (critical thinking, problem analysis, and solution, teamwork, research, and development capacity) and social skills.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) There are no lecturers with a doctoral degree in the Chair of Nursing Science who would be suitable to fill the position of the head of the chair and professor. Due to the lack of a professor, the research in the Master's degree program in nursing science is not competitive in either national or international comparison. As the study programme is losing its credibility due to the weak level of research and publications, immediate financial support from the university is needed to recruit professors and other lecturers with a doctoral degree. The competencies of lecturers in acquiring and managing research projects and creating research groups are limited. The number of students per lecturer is too large and does not leave lecturers time to conduct research.
- 2) Although the university offers training in the development of teaching skills for lecturers, the participation of the lecturers of the chair is limited due to the high workload.
- 3) Opportunities should be sought to consolidate lecturer's workplaces and study rooms in one location.
- 4) Students must be guaranteed access to all the software needed for their studies.
- 5) In the interests of student mobility, more subjects should be offered in English.

PUBLIC HEALTH (MASTER'S STUDY)

Strengths

- 1) The study programme has been developed in accordance with the Estonian Population Health Development Plan and the document *Standard of European Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals* and meets the needs of the Estonian labor market.
- 2) Part of the teaching (incl. practice) takes place at the National Institute for Health Development, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Statistics Estonia, the University of Tartu Hospital, and Pärnu Hospital. The practical and theoretical parts of the study programme are well connected. Specialists from institutions in the field are used as guest lecturers.
- 3) The chair has its own well-equipped library. In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Institute for Health Development, the online public health library RaTeRa has been created, which is highly valued by students.
- 4) The study programme is research-based, and the studies are student-centered. Teaching methods are modern and efficient and support the development of digital culture.
- 5) The lecturers are motivated for development activities. The presence of strong lecturers with doctoral degrees allows students to be involved in research activities as well.
- 6) The research activity of lecturers has increased over the last five years, as has the number of high-level scientific publications. The lecturers have been successful in applying for funding for research projects.
- 7) Both students and employers are very satisfied with the study programme. Graduates are highly valued in the labor market, and employers are very satisfied with their professional training.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Although the study programme includes several specialization modules, the focus since 2008 has been on epidemiology. In addition to epidemiology, it is advisable to open up specializations in health care management and environmental health.
- 2) The study programme should be consistently compared with similar study programmes in other countries to ensure that it is in line with changing international trends.
- 3) In the interests of student mobility, the study programme should also offer English language modules. The provision of a full English study programme should also be considered.
- 4) It would be desirable (including in terms of physical location) to link the chairs of public health and nursing science more closely, which would enable more efficient use of technical and human resources.
- 5) Taking into account the expectations of employers, it is desirable to increase the volume of the practical part of the study programme in all subjects. According to students and alumni, the study programme should include more practical exercises and case-based learning.
- 6) Although the university offers training in the development of teaching skills for lecturers, the participation of the lecturers of the chair is limited due to the high workload.
- 7) In order to reduce student drop-out, it would be advisable to consider providing a childcare service at the university for students with children.

PHYSIOTHERAPY (BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S STUDIES)

Strengths

- 1) Studies are supported by high-level research and publications.
- 2) Students are highly motivated in terms of both studies and research and satisfied with committed and supportive lecturers.
- 3) Professionals with at least three years of clinical experience act as internship supervisors. Additional internships placements have been found in private clinics.
- 4) Practitioners and lecturers from other European countries participate in conducting the study.
- 5) In order to increase the number of student candidates, lecturers actively participate in open doors days and events, introducing the specialty in upper secondary schools.
- 6) Students, alumni, and employers are satisfied with the students' professional training.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The number of hours of clinical practice in the Bachelor's program does not meet the minimum requirements of the *World Confederation of Physical Therapy*. The right solution should be found to bring the study programme in line with international requirements. Employers also consider that students do not have enough clinical skills for internships, so it is advisable to consider their proposal to start clinical practices already at the end of the first academic year. More clinical practice instructors should also be trained.
- 2) It is recommended to expand teaching and research cooperation with Tartu Health Care College, where the same specialty is taught in applied higher education programme.
- 3) It is recommended to consider the proposal of employers to implement the Master's program also in the form of distance learning.
- 4) Efforts should be continued to consolidate teaching in one location.
- 5) The proposal of students to strengthen psychological preparation in the study programme should be considered.

- 6) The drop-out rate of students is quite high. This problem needs further attention.
 - 7) The Council recommends considering the creation of a joint study programme and/or the combination of studies at the first level of higher education with Tartu Health Care College, taking into account the practical orientation of the study programme.
- 10.** Clause 41 of the document “Quality Assessment of the Study Programme Group at the First and Second Level of Higher Education” stipulates that the Assessment Council shall approve the assessment report within three (3) months after its receipt. The Council will consider the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations identified by the Assessment Committee and decide to carry out the next quality assessment of the Study Programme Group in seven or less than seven years.
- 11.** The Council considered the strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations set out in clause 9 and considered that the study programmes of the study programme group, the studies taking place on the study programmes and the development activities of the studies contained the following non-compliances with legislation and international standards and development trends, for the assessment of the elimination of which, in the opinion of the Assessment Council, it is necessary to obtain the feedback of external experts:
- Pursuant to § 6 (7) 1) of the Government of the Republic Regulation “Standard of Higher Education” (SHE), *the conduct of studies conforms to the requirements if: ordinary teaching staff and research staff are available for the studies, who meet the qualification requirements established in legal instruments and whose number is, based on their responsibilities, the volume of conducted studies and research and the number of supervised students, adequate for achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme.* According to clause 2 of the same subsection, *a lecturer or researcher conducting studies in a specific subject must have the necessary teaching competence, and his or her qualification must support the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme.* There are no lecturers with a doctoral degree in the Chair of Nursing Science who would be suitable to fill the position of the head of the chair and professor. Due to the lack of a professor, the research in the Master's degree program in nursing science is not competitive in either national or international comparison. The competencies of the lecturers of nursing science to acquire and manage research projects and to create research groups are limited. The number of students per lecturer is too large and does not leave lecturers time to conduct research. Thus, the number of lecturers whose qualifications and research would support the achievement of the goals of the Master's degree program in nursing science is not sufficient in terms of the number of students in terms of SHE.
 - The number of hours of clinical practice in the Bachelor's program in physiotherapy does not meet the minimum requirements of the *World Confederation of Physical Therapy*. Also, according to employers, students do not have enough clinical skills for practice.

12. In view of the above, the Council

DECIDED

To approve the assessment report and to carry out the next assessment of the quality of the first and second levels of higher education of the Health Care Study Programme Group of University of Tartu in five years.

The decision was adopted by nine votes in favour, none opposed.

13. The EKKA office will coordinate the next quality assessment period of the study programme group with the University of Tartu no later than 11.02.2021.
14. The Council proposes to the University of Tartu to submit to EKKA no later than 11.11.2017 an action plan on taking into account the areas for improvement and recommendations presented in the report.
15. A person who considers that the decision has violated his or her rights or restricted his or her freedoms may file a challenge with the Assessment Council of EKKA within thirty (30) days after the appellant became aware of or should have become aware of the contested act. Contestation of a decision in court is possible within thirty (30) days as of its service by submitting an appeal to the Tallinn Courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

Tõnu Meidla
Head of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council