

Decision Regarding Assessment of the Languages and Cultures Study Programme Group

EuroAcademy

21/08/2018

The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education at the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Languages and Cultures study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at EuroAcademy in three years

On the basis of subsection 21¹ (2) of the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, subsection 14 (7) of the Private Schools Act, subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act and point 41.3 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', authorised in points 3.7.3 and 3.7.1 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA'), the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 05.02.2016 the Council decided to conduct the next quality assessment of the Languages and Cultures at EuroAcademy in three years.
2. On 28.09.2017 EuroAcademy and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct a quality assessment of the Languages and Cultures study programme group.
3. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 05.03.2018, approved the following membership of the committee for the institutional accreditation as well as for the quality assessment of the Business and Administration, Languages and Cultures, and Life Sciences study programme groups at EuroAcademy (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Helen Thomas	Freelance Education Consultant – Chair of the Committee (United Kingdom)
Anca Greere	Assistant Director, QAA, UK, Professor in Linguistics and Translation Studies, Babes-Bolyai University (Romania)
Tanja Dmitrovič	Vice-Rector, Professor, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)
Olav Aarna	Advisor to the management board of the Estonian Qualifications Authority (Kutsekoda) (Estonia)
Anne Perkiö	Head of International Business Programme, Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Finland)
Roger Levy	Professor, The London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom)

Tuula Tuhkanen	Professor, University of Jyväskylä (Finland)
Jekaterina Masenko	Student, Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia)
Johanna Mattila	Professor, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sweden)

4. EuroAcademy submitted the following programmes for evaluation under the Languages and Cultures study programme group:
Translator (Prof HE; in Estonian)
Translator (Prof HE; in Russian)
5. EuroAcademy submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 16.03.2018 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 16.03.2018.
6. An assessment visit was made to EuroAcademy during 8–10.05.2018.
7. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 18.06.2018, EKKA forwarded it to EuroAcademy for its comments on 18.06.2018 and the higher education institution delivered its response on 5.07.2018.
8. The Committee submitted its assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 13.07.2018. That assessment report is an integral part of the decision, and is available on the EKKA website.
9. EuroAcademy submitted its additional comments to the Council on 14.08.2018 and, on 17.08.2018, its comments in letters. The Secretary of the Council informed the Committee of the additional information contained in the letters from EuroAcademy, and on 20.08.2018 the Committee decided to clarify its assessment in the report regarding graduation theses in the Life Sciences study programme group, leaving out the reference to graduation theses prepared at the level of professional higher education.
10. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee's assessment report, along with EuroAcademy's self-evaluation report and its response to the draft assessment report, to the Council members on 2.08.2018. The letters from EuroAcademy to the Council were forwarded by the Secretary of the Council to the Council members on 17.08.2018. The Council discussed the comments and views contained in those letters and took note of them.
11. The Council with 12 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 21.08.2018 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Languages and Cultures study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at EuroAcademy.

Strengths

- 1) The Russian-English programme fills the market niche of a specific student profile.
- 2) EuroAcademy (EA) has purchased computer-assisted translation software that meets modern standards, which allows students to acquire the corresponding certificates.
- 3) Teachers are very supportive of students throughout the learning process and interact with them individually.
- 4) The practical training coordinator of the programme has been successful in providing students with appropriate internship opportunities. The on-site practical training supervisors are well informed and are asked for feedback.
- 5) Teaching staff have translation work experience.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The Faculty's development plan provides for doubling the number of students in the near future. In reality, the number of students has decreased more than three times during the last four

years. EuroAcademy staff were unable to explain to the Committee how to increase the student numbers and what resources would be required. According to the Committee, this lack of understanding of what is needed to achieve goals set is a symptom of a number of the problems at EuroAcademy.

- 2) The changes made to the study programme since the 2015 quality assessment of the study programme group do not provide any evidence of a comprehensive vision for the programme. The self-evaluation report repeatedly mentions frequent changes to the programme, but the teaching staff could not explain the reasons for those changes or the driving forces behind them. The Committee did not find evidence of a systematic market analysis or the collection and analysis of feedback from external stakeholders. Recommendations made during the external quality assurance evaluations are not addressed systematically or consistently. EuroAcademy must ensure that changes to the study programme are made on a more strategic basis, taking into account, inter alia, feedback from employers in the translation industry.
- 3) Students appreciated the foreign language skills acquired from the Translator programme but did not consider the programme to be professionally relevant for the translation profession. Based on discussions with alumni and students, the Committee concluded that there is a mismatch between the title of the study programme, the programme content and what students see as the academic focus of the programme. EuroAcademy should review the study programme for its sustainability, focusing on the competencies it wishes to develop in its graduates, including considering whether a change in emphasis from *translation* to *languages and cultures* or *languages and communication* might be more sustainable in the long run.
- 4) Coherence and synergy between the different components of the study programme should be improved in order to make it clearer to students how the different modules form a coherent programme, what the overall objective of the programme is, and what employment prospects the programme offers to them. The current teaching and learning process does not enable students to acquire all the learning outcomes indicated in the programme. For example, the module of Fundamentals in Translation Studies and Linguistics refers to the requirement that the graduate must be competent in performing pre- and post-translation analysis, but the programme does not include the machine translation component. Learning outcomes for the Internship module include 'experience in teamwork', but internships are completed in the form of individual work.
- 5) The content of the programme should be focused more on developing professional competencies and should ensure that students have adequate knowledge and skills to succeed in the translation industry. The list of compulsory literature should be updated to cover all the main aspects of and approaches to translation.
- 6) Syllabi should be reviewed to ensure that the titles, contents and learning outcomes of the courses are clearly articulated and in line with one another.
- 7) The practical elements of the study programme should be more interconnected, as well as more integrated into the programme.
- 8) Use of translation software should also be integrated into the teaching process.
- 9) Students should be encouraged to make full use of the available library resources, by referring to them in more detail in the course descriptions.
- 10) More attention should be paid to the use of e-learning in the process of teaching and learning. Also, the quality of IT-support is inadequate at EuroAcademy.
- 11) The study programme should use more interactive teaching methods, teamwork and project-based learning, and involve employers in the delivery of specific modules. Throughout the study programme, more attention should be paid to developing students' entrepreneurship skills that are needed in the translation business.
- 12) More structured collaboration among the teaching staff is needed to ensure that all the required learning outcomes are achieved.

- 13) Assessment processes are largely dependent on individual members of the teaching staff, which may result in excessive subjectivity. It is recommended that EuroAcademy find ways of including some form of moderation into the assessment process to ensure that assessments are more consistent and objective.
 - 14) Theses in the Translator programme do not meet the standards of higher education. Teaching staff should choose appropriate texts for students to translate, rather than leaving the choice open to the students. Grading criteria for the theses should be more explicit and better calibrated, allowing students to better understand the basis on which their performance is evaluated.
 - 15) Students should be involved in research and development projects beyond their internships.
 - 16) Staff development should be strategically driven, and the Faculty should strongly encourage staff's self-development. Development needs of the teaching staff should be identified, focusing on both pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills. International staff mobility should be increased as it has a significant impact on the quality of the Translator programme.
 - 17) To determine the applicants' proficiency in the English language (B2 is required), EuroAcademy allows them, as an alternative to internationally acknowledged tests (IELTS, TOEFL), to take a test prepared by EA itself, the functioning mechanisms of which are not clear. It is recommended that EuroAcademy clarify the admission requirements for the Translator programme and ensure that they are consistent with its requirements for general admission to EA.
 - 18) Psychological counselling is not available to students in Estonian. All students are not familiar with the existing counselling services. EuroAcademy should hire a full-time counsellor who would provide students with independent advice.
 - 19) Participation rates in international mobility are low. EuroAcademy should encourage its students to more actively use mobility opportunities and spend some time in English speaking environments.
 - 20) The Faculty should collect and analyse feedback more systematically.
- 12.** Point 41 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', establishes that the Quality Assessment Council shall approve an assessment report within three months after receipt of the report. The Council shall weigh the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations pointed out in the assessment report, and then shall decide whether to conduct the next quality assessment of that study programme group in seven, five or three years.
- 13.** The Council weighed the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations referred to in point 11 of this document and found that the study programmes have the following critical shortcomings:
- Subsection 6 (1) of the Government of the Republic Regulation, 'Standard of Higher Education', prescribes that *study programmes must be in line with the areas of activity of the educational institution that are based on the development plan or statutes of the institution. A study programme must contribute to fulfilling the mission of the educational institution and to achieving its goals and must take into consideration the needs of the labour market and the target group.* According to subsections 6 (1) and (2) of the 'Standard of Higher Education', *a study programme must be in line with the areas of activity and internal quality standards of the educational institution.* According to point 5.1.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', authorised in clause 10 (1) 2), subsection 10 (4) and § 12² of the Universities Act, subsections 21¹ (1) to (2) of the Institutions of Professional Higher Education and subsections 14 (6) to (8) of the Private Schools Act, *the launch or development of the study programme must be based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market*

and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought. The changes made to the study programme since the quality assessment of the study programme group in 2015 do not reflect a comprehensive vision for the programme. The self-evaluation report repeatedly mentions frequent changes to the programme, but the teaching staff could not explain the reasons for or the driving forces behind those changes. The Committee did not find evidence of systematic market analysis or the collection and analysis of feedback from external stakeholders. Recommendations made during external quality assurance evaluations are not addressed systematically or consistently.

- Subsection 6 (5) of the Government of the Republic Regulation, 'Standard of Higher Education', prescribes that *the title and the content of a study programme must be aligned*. Based on discussions with alumni and students, the Committee concluded that there is a mismatch between the title of the study programme, the programme content and what students see as the academic focus of the programme. EuroAcademy should review the study programme for its sustainability, focusing on the competencies it wishes to develop in its graduates, including considering whether a change in emphasis from *translation to languages and cultures* or *languages and communication* might be more sustainable in the long run.
- According to point 5.1.2 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', *the structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme must support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme* and according to point 5.1.3 *the different components of the study programme must form a coherent whole*. The coherence and synergy between the different components of the study programme should be improved in order to make it clear to students how the various modules form a coherent programme, what the overall objective of the programme is and what employment prospects the programme offers to them. The current teaching and learning process does not enable students to acquire all the learning outcomes indicated in the programme. Syllabi should be reviewed to ensure that the titles, contents and learning outcomes of the courses are clearly articulated and in line with one another.
- Theses in the Translator programme do not demonstrate compliance of the graduates' knowledge and skills with the standards established for professional higher education by Annex 1 to the 'Standard of Higher Education'.
- Point 5.4.5 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education' prescribes that *the teaching staff are routinely engaged in professional and teaching skills development*. The teaching staff are not engaged in systematic teaching skills or professional development. International mobility, which is crucial to the Translator programme, is very low.
- Point 5.5.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education' prescribes that *student places are filled with motivated and capable students*. To determine the applicants' proficiency in the English language (B2 is required), EuroAcademy allows them, as an alternative to internationally acknowledged tests (IELTS, TOEFL), to take the test prepared by EA itself, the functioning mechanisms of which are not clear. It is recommended that EuroAcademy clarify the admission requirements for the Translator programme and ensure that they are consistent with its requirements for general admission to EA.
- Point 5.5.4 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education' stipulates that *as part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students*. Participation rates in international mobility are low. EuroAcademy should encourage its students

to more actively use mobility opportunities and spend some time in English speaking environments.

14. On the basis of the foregoing, the Council

DECIDED

to approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Languages and Cultures study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at EuroAcademy in three years.

The decision was adopted by 12 votes in favour and 0 against.

15. The Bureau of EKKA will coordinate a date for the next quality assessment of the study programme group with EuroAcademy no later than 21.11.2020.
16. A person who finds that his or her rights have been violated or his or her freedoms restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding.

The Council shall forward the challenge to its Appeals Committee who shall provide an unbiased opinion in writing regarding the validity of the challenge to the Council, within five days after receipt of the challenge. The Council shall resolve the challenge within ten days of its receipt, taking into account the reasoned opinion of the Appeals Committee. If the challenge needs to be investigated further, the deadline for its review by the Council may be extended by a maximum of thirty days.

A judicial challenge to this decision is possible within 30 days after its delivery, by filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

Eve Eisenschmidt
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council