

ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

Institution: Tallinna Ülikool (*Tallinn University*)

Assessment committee:

Malcolm Cook – Chair; University of Exeter, Professor Emeritus, UK
Carmen Fenoll – Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Professor of Plant Physiology, Spain
Andrew Goodspeed – South East European University, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Macedonia
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Helka Urponen – University of Lapland, PhD, Docent, Finland
Karina Ufert – University of Vilnius, student; educational advisor, Lithuania

Coordinator: Tiia Bach

Dates of the assessment visit: 8 – 10 April 2014

Assessment committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA: 11.05.2014

Assessment committee received the comments of the institution under accreditation: 23.05.2014

Assessment committee approved the final version of component assessment with 6 votes in favour and 0 votes against.

Date: 29.05.2014

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

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

Comments:

The committee congratulated the University on the open process that led to the self-assessment report. Staff and students across the institution were involved in the creation of the document; the result was an excellent report, self-critical and analytical with a wealth of information and a large number of results of surveys that gave a good indication of what the university saw as its strengths and weaknesses. The committee recognised that at the time of the visit this was an institution that was in the process of reassessment, of building a new university based on solid foundations. What the committee saw was a snapshot of work in progress. Self-evaluation was clearly seen as an opportunity to assess itself and to plan the future.

The Committee found a University that was beginning to forge a new identity, based on the very strong foundations from the past. Naturally, such change introduces problems but the Committee felt that the operation was being carried out in an open and

democratic manner. During the visit the Committee was able to meet a whole range of groups, from students, alumni, external stakeholders and of course University staff, both academic and non-academic. The meetings were held in an open and frank manner, and the team was able to appreciate the depth of knowledge and the significant amount of management skill contained within the institution. Clearly, there are challenges ahead and these were discussed with senior management in particular. During the visit two members of the committee were able to visit one of the colleges of the University, Haapsalu College, where again an open and friendly manner was encountered. This was an attitude that was apparent throughout the evaluation and the Committee noted this openness with gratitude and appreciation.

Commendations:

- Recognition of the need to restructure in order to develop cohesion, interdisciplinarity, rationalisation of support staff
- Well-qualified and highly competent support staff in key positions
- Internationalisation, including language skills. Throughout the course of the visit the team rarely had need for the interpreter; such was the high quality of the staff and students with whom we met.
- Staff development procedures currently funded by the Primus project. There is careful and evident planning of staff development available across the institution.
- The study abroad portal system. The University has in the library an interactive computer system that allows staff and students to seek information about possible exchanges. The team saw this as an innovative tool that it had not seen in use elsewhere.
- Pockets of international excellence both in terms of research and in terms of outreach: Asian Studies, Film Studies, Innovation in Education, collaborative work on the curriculum in developing countries (e.g. Georgia and Afghanistan), comprehensive student counselling service for careers and study guidance, undertaken by trained staff, by academic staff and by students

- Use of external advice in the preparation of programmes and curricula
- Excellent learning resources, both in terms of buildings and fitness for purpose and in terms of equipment provision

Recommendations:

- Focus on the future structure of the University in order to develop a coherent framework and interdisciplinarity, and manage a balanced budget.
- Develop systems across the university that will ensure a quality provision that is universal and consistency of practice and systems that will allow the university to detect any areas of weakness in order to take remedial action.
- Develop a comprehensive alumni network by the creation of dedicated web space and by the creation of a complete database.
- Assess the nature of risk in the University and develop contingency plans in accordance with the risk register'
- Develop an enhancement strategy in the university that will encourage and guarantee the spread of good practice.
- Seek ways to develop a true postgraduate culture and introduce a code of practice for research students and their supervision.
- Increase the efforts to develop a long-term research profile linked to present TU strengths and to opportunities related to the country and ministerial priorities for development.

II Assessment areas and sub-areas

1 ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

General comments:

As a young university only founded nine years ago in 2005, Tallinn University has already demonstrated considerable maturity in its organizational management and performance. The University is experiencing the transition of growing out of the merger of 26 units toward a greater identity as a unified university. The University is experiencing some “growing pains” but has an effective administration and staff committed to finding solutions to difficult issues. During this time of growth, TU has experienced some financial challenges but is in a position with strong financial management to stabilize itself for the future depending on the ability to create a smaller number of autonomous units.

1.1 General management	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:

A higher education institution has defined its role in the Estonian society.

The development plan and the related action plans of a higher education institution arise from the concrete purposes that are built on its mission, vision and core values, and that consider the country’s priorities and society’s expectations.

Key results of a higher education institution have been defined.

The leadership of a higher education institution conducts the preparation and implementation of development and action plans and includes the members and other stakeholders in this work.

Liability at all management levels has been defined and described, and it supports the achievement of institutional purposes and the coherent performance of core processes.

Internal and external communications of a higher education institution (including marketing and image building) are purposeful and managed.

Tallinn University can be described as an institution in a transitional phase of defining its role in Estonia. The University is the youngest of six public universities in Estonia, having been founded only nine years ago in 2005. As such, the University represents a merger of several research and development Institutes and academic programmes into one unit now comprising 19 institutes and 6 colleges with 10,000 students and another 15,000 participating in continuing education programmes and the Open University. The addition of so many separate units in such a brief time period gives the impression of the growth being unplanned yet encouraged by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research as part of the country's efforts to reduce the number of individual units being supported by the government. Based on interviews with all of the Directors of the autonomous Institutes, the transition has gone remarkably smoothly. The Rector informed the Committee that they do not plan for any additional Institutes or Colleges to join but that the focus will be on merger within the University. The need for a well-defined role for TU in the country is self-evident. The Committee was impressed throughout its visit by how much has been accomplished in such a short time period in the process of creating an identity as one university, but much remains to be done. Most alumni and many students feel their primary allegiance is to the Institute where they take classes (or graduated from) rather than to the new University. As the University matures, hopefully the University will be able to find ways to maintain the strength of identity with an Institute while creating a growing loyalty and commitment to the University. Since TU grew out of the strong foundation of the Tallinn Pedagogical University, the Ministry continues to view the education of primary and secondary school teachers as the major strength of TU; yet to have a successful future given the decline in the number of students interested in taking pedagogy, the University is in the process of defining a larger role as a more comprehensive university embracing the importance of research, incorporating the strong missions of each Institute, and focusing on its growing role and importance in broader society on a national and international basis. Given this young history and the large number of unique units, the Committee supports the efforts of TU's administration to define the University's role into a smaller number of units. Most universities can be excellent only in several well defined areas and the Committee encourages the University to make this a high priority.

Part of the role of TU has been the acquisition of two colleges in adjacent areas. Two Committee members visited Haapsalu College. This college serves a small town and its environs primarily with vocation-oriented programmes since the pedagogy programme has closed due to a lack of student interest. The building is well maintained and equipped through European funds with advanced technology. The college appears to be well run with students and faculty enthusiastic about being in a smaller and more family oriented caring atmosphere than in a large city. Most of the students are adult learners with programmes created that enable them to work and attend college. The College feels fully part of the larger University but is struggling to find its future identity with the loss of its largest programme. Within the larger goals of education for Estonia, the College serves a special role which is unusual for a

university to undertake. The loss of the programme in pedagogy is clearly having an impact on this college which, while doing a valuable job for its region and the community, feels to some extent more like a further education college than a University. The structure of Tallinn University is itself unusual. As it seeks to forge an identity it carries many activities under its large umbrella.

The current Development Plan grows out of five prioritized fields established by the Estonian Higher Education Strategy, 2006-2014—engineering, computer sciences, manufacturing and processing, healthcare, and personal service provision. The TU Development Plan in place at the time of the visit concentrates on five fields of activities: research, studies, membership, management, and social relationships carried out through six academic disciplines: educational sciences, humanities, the arts, natural sciences, social sciences, and health sciences. The institution's Self-Assessment Report acknowledges the need for focusing on fewer specific fields which the Committee supports.

The University has a comprehensive planning and implementation process for the development of a new plan growing out of discussions with all major stakeholders including the government, partners, Advisory Board, Domain Councils, the Student Body, and the Senate. The strategic objectives of a new Development Plan, 2015-2020 shown to the team by the Rector (but not yet approved by the Senate) shows promise of achieving a more focused mission by seeing the University as an *initiator of a smart lifestyle*. Three basic principles of interdisciplinary, internationalization, and professionalism and sustainability undergird the plan. The new plan appears to meet goals established by the country for its higher education institutions.

The strategic objectives will now need to be undergirded by detailed objectives, established benchmarks compared to other Estonian and international universities, targets, and aims, restructuring plans to reduce the number of units, year-by-year timelines, multi-year budgets, and projected enrolment and staffing needs. The demographics of Estonia project a declining number of high school students from 100,000 a few years ago to 60,000 today which means the Development Plan will need to recommend some very difficult choices yet to be defined. The Committee interviewed numerous administrators, staff, and Directors from all Institutes and found a high level of professionalism and commitment to doing what is necessary to become a stronger and more unified university and to implement a new Development Plan.

As a recently established university, TU shows evidence that the process of defining its key results is well established with continuing maturity expected as the University's role is more precisely defined and as the merger of units takes place to reduce the number of autonomous units. The enhancement of TU's program will help define more clearly what results are anticipated in general for a graduate beyond the outcomes in specific academic programmes. The Committee acknowledges the growing efforts for quality

assurance at TU but recommends that a more unified approach be taken while the number of units are merged and reduced in order to bring a more consistent quality assurance system across all units.

The governance structure of TU established by law creates challenges for the creation and implementation of Development Plans that may require difficult choices. The 40-member Senate, composed of the Rector, Vice Rectors, Director of Facilities and Finances, the heads of each of the 26 units, members of the Advisory Board, a representative of the Labour Union, and one-fifth who are students, must approve budgets, the Development Plan, and major university initiatives. The Chair is elected by the Senate and is not the Rector. The Rector is elected by employees composed of the Senate in addition to all senior professors for a five year term. Further complicating this structure is the autonomy of each of the 26 units functioning in an almost independent way with their own structures, budget management, and staff, replicating, in some cases, what should be done at a central level. Administration continually mentioned the decentralized collaborative focus of governance which is part of the University's culture. This governance structure means that a Development Plan containing difficult recommendations about a unit's future must be voted upon by the group who will be directly impacted and who were part of the Rector's election, a process which could pose a challenge to the ability of a Rector to make difficult recommendations. By the time a new Development Plan might be developed and recommended, the Rector may only have a brief period of time left in his/her five year term before facing re-election. As the University matures, the Committee suggests that administration may need to become more centralized in order to improve efficiency while still maintaining a spirit of collaboration in making big and bold decisions. The Committee heard optimism that Estonians have shown the willingness to make tough decisions by putting aside personal interests for the good of the whole. This collaborative culture, focused on making hard choices, will be needed in upcoming years as TU continues the transition from a largely unplanned expansion of units to a single university. Rather than managing what TU currently has in place, the focus will need to be on what the future shape and structure of the university will be. At the moment it appears rather as an accumulation of units and the University will need to consider what the optimum shape and size of the institution should be. The future of TU lies in unification, not expansion. The Committee was heartened by the courage expressed by the Rector and his fellow administrators in recommending what is necessary for the University. Without giving up its independence and input into a new Development Plan, the Committee encourages the Senate to show similar courage in the development of their university. Similarly, as the University moves forward it will need to continue current efforts to establish agreements for long-term cooperation with target universities in Europe and beyond for both mobility exchanges and research cooperation by becoming more targeted and effective.

The Committee was impressed with the high quality of management as seen through administration and support staff. The high level of

competence and clear understanding of expected job performance demonstrated a clear definition of expected performance. Both top and middle levels of management impressed the Committee. Evaluation of all employees takes place on a regular basis with opportunities made available for professional development. The Committee was also impressed by the high satisfaction levels of those working at TU expressed in the interviews, although some of the surveys presented in the Self-Assessment Report show needed improvements in several areas. After a challenging 2013, given the uncertainty of the future, many steps have taken place to focus on the areas of needed improvement.

TU is in the process of creating a single image/brand as a university for the various units that have become part of the merger. Because many of the units still have a strong identity from their past history, this process will not be easy, but the beginning stages are showing success through impressive recognition of Tallinn University in the media compared to longer established institutions. The marketing research and materials show professionalism, sophistication, attractiveness, and strong image building, although the web site might be more assertive in focusing on the many strengths of TU rather than just conveying factual information (which is also important). The modern conference center is part of external imaging offering 120 to 150 events each year.

Commendations:

- Creation of a mature university with its own identity in a short number of years
- The smooth transition from individual units to becoming part of a new university
- Recognition of the need to restructure in order to develop cohesion, interdisciplinary, rationalization of support staff
- Well-qualified and highly competent staff in key positions, both managerial and support
- Mature and bold planning demonstrated in new Development Plan
- The spirit of collaboration present in decentralization which focuses on finding solutions to challenging problems

Recommendations:

- Focus on the future structure of the University in order to develop a coherent framework, with an interdisciplinary focus
- Manage a balanced budget
- Implement plans to merge units in the very near future
- Develop systems across the university that will ensure a quality provision that is universal
- Establish consistency of practice and systems that will allow the university to detect areas of weakness in order to take remedial

action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an enhancement strategy in the University and develop contingency plans in accordance with the risk register • Establish long-term cooperation with target universities for both mobility exchanges and research. • Fully develop the new Development Plan with benchmarks, targets and aims, restructuring plans to reduce the number of units, year-by-year timelines, multi-year budgets, and projected enrolment and staffing needs • Encourage the Senate to collaborate with administration on addressing solutions to future challenges in the adoption of a new Development Plan • Study the possibility of asking the government to allow a different governance structure similar to what other Estonian higher education institutions have been able to obtain through new laws for them 							
1.2 Personnel management	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition
<p>Requirements:</p> <p><i>The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development arise from the objectives of the development plan of a higher education institution, and ensure academic sustainability.</i></p> <p><i>When selecting, appointing and evaluating members of the academic staff, their past activities (teaching, RDC, student feedback, etc.) are taken into account in a balanced way.</i></p> <p><i>The principles of remuneration and motivation of employees are clearly defined, available to all employees, and implemented.</i></p> <p><i>Employee satisfaction with the management, working conditions, flow of information, etc., is regularly surveyed and the results used in improvement activities.</i></p> <p><i>Employees participate in international mobility programmes, cooperation projects, networks, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Employees base their activities on principles of academic ethics.</i></p>							
<p>Tallinn University recruits through an open advertisement system. This process is primarily organized by the TU Personnel Office, but includes the respective Academic Units when the vacant position is academic. Recruitment procedures are run according to the policies outlined in the TU Employment Relations Rule, which claims to be compliant with the relevant laws of Estonia (Republic of</p>							

Estonia Employment Contracts Act, Republic of Estonia Universities Act, etc.). Recruitment is structured in the Rule and in the Development Plan to ensure administrative support, relevance of academic expertise, and financial sustainability. This multi-layered approach has resulted in a staff of (2012) 460.5 full-time academic staff supported by 541.5 full-time administrative staff operating across the University. The financial sustainability of this is overseen by the individual Directors of Academic Units, who are ultimately responsible on budgetary matters to the Director of Facilities and Finances, and to the Rector. The resultant staff is also diverse: average ages for different categories of staff vary from 31 (administrative staff with B.A. or equivalent) to 51 (academic staff with PhD), with the vast majority (all but 1.7 holding Bachelor degree or equivalent) of academic staff holding either MA or PhD degrees. The Committee has concerns that the size of the staff may have grown larger than needed, although it recognizes the difficulty of putting together a new University with 26 separate units as the central office has grown. About one hundred of the staff work at the library, which also serves as the country's major library with additional funds coming from the country for this purpose. However, the Committee encourages study be given to reducing the number of staff as the merger of units takes place, hopefully in the near future. The Committee is not convinced that one hundred library staff is an entirely justifiable number.

For the recruitment and assessment of academic staff, TU considers the background, appropriateness, and accomplishments of the candidates, as well as the relevance of the vacancy to the study programme. This was verified to the Committee in conversation with members of the academic staff. Representatives of the Personnel Office informed the Committee that Academic Committee, Domain Councils and experts (the latter for higher positions) assess the candidates for a new academic position and assess educational credentials, previous academic employment, published research, and suitability of professional speciality; promotion or continuation of existing employment would also involve internally generated data such as student survey results, teaching commendations, or notable contributions to the Unit or the University. High quality publications are noted and rewarded—the Self-Assessment Report (2014) states clearly that 'best publications of the research fields are recognized.' In negative terms, formal complaints or disciplinary matters would also be considered. The number of individuals competing for faculty openings seemed small to the committee but given the small number of qualified individuals in a country with a small population these numbers may not be surprising. Recruitment of more international faculty may provide a partial solution as openings occur.

The principles of remuneration are guided by the Tallinn University Remuneration Regulation, which is a document freely available to staff on the internal TU web. This establishes the basic tenets of remuneration and staff reward. The range of salaries offered between academic units seemed very wide although the Committee did not hear any complaints. Additional motivational bonuses, in the form of extended leave or supplementary pay, are available to reward excellence, as stated in the Self-Assessment Report.

Student survey results are tallied to generate an award for excellence in teaching. There is also a TU 'Badge of Merit,' which several of the academic staff who spoke with the Committee had been awarded. Staff are also acknowledged by social gestures such as anniversary or birthday greetings from the Rector, to promote a sense of solidarity within the University.

Employee satisfaction is measured by questionnaire, with numbers being based on an unusual 7-point scale. This questionnaire solicits opinion on topics such as cooperativeness of units; movement of information; satisfaction of staff with management, etc. The questionnaire also includes an 'open comment' section, to accommodate answers more specific than can be generated by the scaled answers.

Results of the satisfaction surveys are shared with staff, even when the results record a diminishment in staff satisfaction or confidence (as, for example, the notable decline in agreement between 2012 and 2013 with the statements 'I am aware of Tallinn University objectives' and 'Tallinn University is progressing towards the set objectives.'). That these disappointing results were openly included in the Self-Assessment Report (2014) is an indication that the data generated by these surveys are acknowledged and distributed in good faith to improve University management and policies.

Employees participate in international mobility programmes and other international projects, although this participation appears to be heavily weighted towards academic staff. The Personnel Office notified the Committee that they expect to attain and surpass the goal of having 100 academic staff go abroad on mobility programmes in the academic year 2014-2015 and they expressed the belief that current (2014) participation justifies this confidence. Disappointingly, there was a decrease in students going abroad between 2012 and 2013; TU staff suggested that this may have been the result of Erasmus funds too meagre to cover the costs of stays in expensive destination countries.

It is the stated goal of the Development Plan to increase the presence of international staff, either by hiring full-time employees, or recruiting guest lecturers of distinction for limited periods of time. The current percentage of international employees is a strong 8.7% of full-time staff (and a 2.1% increase since 2010) which is high compared to other Estonian universities, and is regionally distinguished.

The Committee was told that, in addition to their teaching or lecturing responsibilities, the international staff members also sometimes provide collegial proofreading services into their native languages for Estonian staff members who wish to publish their

research in languages other than Estonian.

According to the Employment Regulation, any candidate known to have breached academic ethics is prohibited from contesting an open position. Students mentioned in interviews with the Committee that they were aware of at least one instructor whose engagement was not renewed, and it was their opinion that this was as a result of student complaints about lack of professionalism by that instructor. Moreover, the academic staff, again in conversation with the Committee, verified that they are permitted academic freedom in their teaching and assessment.

Commendations:

- Clear and applied policies for recruitment and continuation of contract
- Strong emphasis on academic freedom and the role of the Academic Council
- Varied reward mechanisms to recognize excellence of performance
- High percentage of foreign staff in line with TU’s Internationalization priority

Recommendations:

- Administrative staff should also be encouraged to participate in exchange programmes, where possible.
- University goals and aims should be better explained to staff, as there has been a recent decline in staff belief that they know these goals and that TU is moving towards them.
- Administrative staff may need to be redeployed in some circumstances, as the ratio of administrative staff to academic staff is uncommonly high.

1.3 Management of financial resources and infrastructure	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:

The allocation of financial resources of a higher education institution as well as the administration and development of infrastructure are economically feasible, and are based on the objectives of the development plan of an institution of higher education and national



priorities (except private institutions).

A higher education institution uses information systems that support its management and the coherent performance of its core processes.

The working conditions of the staff, and the learning and RDC conditions of students (library, studios, workshops, laboratories, etc.) meet the needs arising from the specifics of an institution of higher education and the expectations of members.

The costs of creating a new university are enormous which means that the financial challenges facing TU must be put into a broader context. The University consists of a main campus with six buildings all inter-connected into one large complex. Three of the buildings were built since the founding of the University in 2005 from funds provided by the European Union for developing nations and by the Estonian government. No debt was incurred in building what can only be described as an ultra-modern, futuristic, “green” oriented and spacious building compound equipped with the latest in technology and science laboratory equipment that would be the envy of any university.

The generous contribution of European and Estonian funds has given time for the University to grow without building up the kind of significant debt it would have needed if this activity had been self-funded.

Even though TU has been losing money, given its youth and rapid expansion, finances are in a relatively good position after a period of building infrastructure and the hiring of additional staff to handle the expansion. The current administration has stanchied the losses from the past and is developing a solid plan to achieve a balanced budget by 2016. During this period of losses, reserves have been used to balance operations but this cannot continue or there will be no reserves left.

TU’s administration is to be commended for its management of its assets while planning for the future in multiple ways. Some of the losses have come for strategic investments in new programmes of future growth and need. Some of the Institutes and Colleges continue to have buildings separate from the campus which are being sold so that consolidation on the main campus can take place for efficiency. While some of the buildings have limited sale value due to their unique nature, some funds should be realized from the sale of other properties and the cancellation of leased buildings with savings incurred from moving to one central complex of buildings at the main campus. In this context, the importance of reducing the number of units from 26 to fewer is essential if TU is to create a viable

financial future. Some of the programs are so small that maintaining them is not warranted both in terms of financial cost and ability to offer a quality programme. The Rectorate is already aware of this issue and plans to let natural attrition take its course while urging a merger for other units. With each Institute and College running its own operations after receiving the budget approved by the Senate, this autonomy is costly and inefficient because more employees are needed to run each unit rather than relying on a central university operation for shared services. The Committee was impressed with the high quality found in the offices of the central university and so is confident of their ability to take on even more responsibilities. Some of the tension evident between individual unit management of budgets which sometimes run over budget and central administration will need to be settled. A devolved budgetary system can only work if all units keep to their budgets and do not overspend. Overspend always produces tension and anxiety. While most of those interviewed agreed about the need for merger, they may be harder to remove given their past independence and loyalty to each unit rather than the University. Undergoing short term hardship for the long term good of the University is an important value undergirding society which may enable these mergers to happen sooner than in other cultures.

The administration is also facing up to other challenges. The higher education reform act in Estonia now makes tuition free for those who speak Estonian _but in the opinion of the team insufficient funds were provided by the government to cover these additional costs. Prior to the reform act about 50% of TU students were paying tuition. The short fall in funds will need to be addressed as most students will transition to this new plan over the next three years. When government funding is recalculated in 2016, another challenge point may be reached. The declining number of students will also need to be taken into consideration for future budgets. Of great concern to the team is the loss of European funds in 2020. Equipment and buildings purchased with European funds will be depreciating with the prospect of no further European funds to maintain the new buildings or to replace aging equipment. The University is encouraged to make plans now by funding depreciation of assets so that replacement can be planned for using University funds.

The committee is concerned about the number of academic units (22 out of 28) that appear to be losing money. Given the autonomy of each unit and need for more accountability, the Committee supports the new Director of Facilities and Finances to utilize the power he has through regulation to take over the finances of a unit when losing money on a periodic basis. This will not be easy or politic, yet it will be necessary.

After discussing these issues with the Rector and Director of Facilities and Finances and his staff, the Committee is impressed with the level of candour and focus on finding solutions for the financial challenges facing TU in the near future.

TU uses several different kinds of well-known and respected information systems within the spirit of freedom allowed as the University was being created. Those running them appear to be well qualified and knowledgeable. The lack of integrated systems leads to the inability to create consolidated reports from different databases. A more unified policy on information systems would help improve the integration and centralization of information systems. The result should be a greater ability by the University to use data for decision-making.

The modernity of the buildings and equipment has already been addressed in this report as being of the highest possible order. The physical working space for staff located in modern facilities creates a positive work environment. However, surveys indicate some employee satisfaction issues that are being addressed by administration.

Commendations:

- The high level of competence of financial administration and the management of financial resources through a remarkable time of creation and rapid growth
- The construction of quality buildings of the highest possible order with the help of funds provided by the European Union

Recommendations:

- Balance the budget by 2016 in accord with TU's stated goal.
- Include in the Development Plan a proposed merger of units to create greater financial efficiency
- Plans be made for saving funds to replace new equipment and to provide for building maintenance purchased through funds from the European Union which will cease in 2020.
- Continue to develop financial plans for implementing the consequences of the reform Universities Act of Estonia which now requires free tuition for all students studying in the Estonian language.

2 TEACHING AND LEARNING
<p>General comments:</p> <p>In terms of teaching and learning, Tallinn University conforms to requirements set by EKKA. Despite this conformity, TU finds itself in transition towards more integration; some important steps have been taken to harmonise existing procedures (i.e. development of study programmes) and oversee their implementation. There have been noticeable efforts to avoid overlaps in providing services or collecting data or information (e.g. moving towards centralised alumni survey). The institution has developed some good practices in innovative teaching; however, it is important to give more visibility to those practices and spread them across the academic community. TU has acquired excellent infrastructure to support the educational process, as well as facilities for external activities (conferences, summer schools). In this particular section the Committee identified a number of areas where there was some concern. These have been spelt out clearly at the end of each sub-section in order that they can be clearly identified in context. In some cases these have led to a formal recommendation but in other cases the concern has not led to a specific recommendation. It is simply noted as something the University will want to consider.</p>

2.1 Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<p>Requirements:</p> <p><i>A higher education institution has defined its educational objectives and measures their implementation.</i></p> <p><i>A higher education institution educates students so they are nationally and internationally competitive.</i></p> <p><i>The number of student places is planned in accordance with the social need and the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education.</i></p> <p><i>The admission rules are consistent with the mission and purposes of an institution of higher education and support the formation of a motivated student body.</i></p> <p><i>Students are provided with opportunities to study at a higher education institution regardless of any special needs.</i></p>					

According to the self-assessment report, TU has established its teaching and learning objectives until 2014 and put mechanisms in place to monitor their achievement. Specific study-field objectives and key indicators, related to teaching and learning are set out in the Development plans of the academic units; the progress has been documented and made public through reports. TU Development reports are available on the website.

In the programme design stage, the respective national (Estonian) and international comparison is included in the preliminary project as well as the final project of the study programme. In the case of an active study programme, the head of the study programme is responsible for ensuring the compliance of the content of the study programme with the needs of students and society (particularly labour market). Suitability of academic and support staff, content and delivery aspects are sought in the revision process as well. This has been confirmed while interviewing TU staff, notably the Vice-rector for Academic Affairs, Academic Auditor and others.

The interview with employers revealed general satisfaction with the graduates of TU, who are regarded as fit for the job after graduation (or even during their studies). From the meeting with the TU Career counsellor, the committee learnt that in general TU employees have no particular difficulty in finding a job after graduation.

The distribution of study places in TU depends on the previous effectiveness of the study programme. The criteria for effectiveness are admission numbers for the previous years and the completion rate. While submitting the proposal for study places, academic units are required to take into account the above mentioned criteria, as well as feedback from alumni and employees. Following the higher education reform in Estonia in 2013, the number of study places at the second level of study in particular sciences and all doctoral study programmes are negotiated and agreed by TU and the Ministry of Education and Research. The University recognizes that some of the programmes are too small to be academically or economically viable. The committee supports the Rectorate's commitment to establishing minimal numbers to open a study programme established as ten students for a Master's programme and fifteen for a Bachelor's programme.

Admission requirements and procedures for all study programmes (including those, taught in English) are published on TU's website (<http://www.tlu.ee/en/studies/Admissions-2014>). The meeting with students did not reveal any major failure with regards to admissions criteria. The interviewed students claimed they could access all relevant information about requirements, content of the study programme, and employment perspectives.

There seems to be no single opinion among the members of academic community, whether stricter admission requirements would help to improve the quality of prospective students or increase the retention rates. On the other hand, the institution recognises the importance of support and guidance services to assist in the course of studies, including the induction period at the beginning of studies.

According to the self-assessment report, TU admits students, diagnosed with severe or profound disability to pursue Bachelor's or Masters level studies on a state-financed basis. Students can inform respective authorities about their special needs (if any) through the TU information system. The main TU campus has adequate facilities for students with wheelchair accessibility. Some of the buildings have facilities to assist students with impaired vision.

The committee met with representatives from the Career and Counselling Centre (CCC), namely the University psychologist, who provides psychological counselling for students free of charge. CCC has published a manual on effective learning for students; the manual is accessible through TU's information centre. The TU Student Council is running a number of social programmes, including one for student counsellors, available at all academic units. There is a children's day-care room available for students and staff; the Student Council runs the room on a voluntary basis.

Commendations:

- In some areas, programmes – good inter-institutional cooperation/coordination (teacher training) on the national/regional level
- Clear employer satisfaction, also with “interdisciplinary approach” – teacher training, BFM
- Closure of ten programs reducing from 148 to 138 the number being offered which shows a focus on educational quality and economic efficiency

Areas of concern:

High drop-out rates, particularly for PhD students (recognised by TU itself) and not only drop-outs, but also completion time increased nearly 30%

- No explicit, institution-level policy for students with special needs (recognised by TU itself in its self-assessment report).
- Need to implement plans on how to deal with unpopular programmes (example of academic unit/ programme with 4 students).

Vice-rector for academic affairs has suggested minimum level of 10 student places for MA/ 15 places for BA to be approved, but this will need to be enforced

- Proper graduate tracking system missing (though there is information on how many students are working etc.)
- Interaction with employers mainly happening on the academic unit level; no University-wide system (Advisory Board seems not to be fulfilling its purpose.)
- The number of study programme groups (15) that received the right to conduct studies for a determined period of time in their review process

Recommendations:

- Systematically collect information on student post-graduation career choices (graduate tracking system)
- Increase the awareness of the university staff regarding students with special needs. and develop and implement university-wide policy on addressing this
- Provide more guidance and support for PhD students
- Enforce the minimum number of study places required to offer a programme

2.2 Study programme development	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:

A higher education institution bases its new study programmes on its purposes and the needs of the labour market, and takes into account the strategies of the country and expectations of the society.

Development activities related to study programmes are systematic and regular, and different stakeholders are involved in the development of study programmes.

Graduate satisfaction with the quality of instruction and employer satisfaction with the quality and suitability to the requirements of the labor market of graduates are surveyed and analysed; the results are considered in the development of study programmes.

According to the TU regulations, stakeholders (employers, trade associations, alumni) are broadly involved in the programme development process. This happens through the specific Study Programme Council or extensive consultation, when the head of study programme seeks external opinion through surveys or focus groups. As confirmed during the interviews at the main campus in Tallinn and the College in Haapsalu, employer representatives confirmed providing feedback on programme design or delivery, as well as their satisfaction with the level of graduate preparations. Employers who met the assessment team stated that they do not need to provide any extensive work-based training when employing TU graduates. Some of the respondents particularly praised the inter-disciplinary approach and competences among TU students and graduates. Employers seem to be engaging in organising summer schools, festivals and other activities.

While it is clear that some of the study programme heads or heads of academic units take pro-active steps in engaging with the society, overall, across the University as a whole, there seems to lack a unified institutional policy direction (e.g. relatively inactive Advisory Board).

A Skype call with the Ministry representative helped the assessment committee to understand the strategic importance of TU within the national context, particularly in the areas related to teacher training, social work, and the creative industries.

Procedure for developing study programmes is regulated within the TU Study Programme Statute. Main responsibility for developing and reviewing study programmes lies with the head of each study programme and the head of the academic unit. TU Academic Auditor (interviewed by the committee) is overseeing the process to make sure that academic units are compliant with the university regulations.

Study programmes are reviewed regularly on the basis of student, alumni and employer questionnaires. While such information can provide TU with useful insights for continuous enhancement of study programmes, the worrying aspect is a relatively low number of respondents. This again speaks in favour of strengthening the alumni network, and systematically involving employers, professional organisations through public events (fairs), graduate tracking surveys.

According to the data, presented by the TU, a majority of graduates (78% for 2013) were satisfied with their studies. Such findings were largely supported during the interview with alumni; however, few of them decided to continue studies at TU at the post-graduate level. Alumni representatives have praised the TU efforts to provide flexibility in designing one's learning path, though

some stressed the importance of academic guidance to be able to do so and complete studies on time. No data on employers' satisfaction was presented; however during the interviews a majority were highly positive about the quality of TU graduates. Lack of consistent data once again suggests the importance of systematic employers' involvement. High employment rates after graduation (based on the alumni survey, 83,8% for 2013) may support such findings, if the nature of those jobs corresponds to the level of qualifications of the graduates (no such information available).

Commendations:

- TU is recognising the importance to involve stakeholders in design and delivery of educational process
- Establishment of an academic auditor to oversee the compliance with TU regulations

Recommendations:

- Systematically collect information on student post-graduation career choices (graduate tracking system)
- Harmonise university practices with regards to developing and reviewing study programmes, as well as stakeholder engagement, particularly after the academic audit, which revealed the questionable effectiveness of the Study Programme Councils and abolished them

2.3 Student academic progress and student assessment	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:

Student academic progress is monitored and supported.

Student assessment supports learning and is in line with learning outcomes.

A higher education institution has an effective system for taking account of prior learning and work experience.

Self-assessment report, information provided on the website as well as interviews with teaching staff and students revealed that students' academic progress in TU is monitored and supported. Support is embedded within the organisational structure through the establishment of academic tutors at each academic unit. Student council has its own academic advisor available for students'

requests. While the high drop-out rate remains a pressing problem, the explanation given by University staff, students and employers suggests that this is happening due to early enrolment into the labour market to gain additional work experience or cover study and living expenses. While those undergraduate students interviewed by the committee find their level of academic guidance and support sufficient enough, this seems not to be the case with doctoral students. There are particular national problems that apply to doctoral students who, according to national regulations, as well as submitting their research paper and undertaking teaching duties, have to publish at least 3 articles prior to graduation. Doctoral students who were interviewed expressed the view that they needed more support in this area, which itself is unusually demanding and not the norm for other European doctoral students.

As explained by academic staff, as well as presented in a sample curriculum and online information system, student assessment requirements are available for students before the course. Sometimes students can alternate assessment methods if in line with learning outcomes (e.g. do a presentation instead of an essay). Interviewed students confirmed, they were aware of the requirements before the beginning of the course; they found assessment procedures fair. According to TU alumni survey, around 69% of respondents claimed they understood how the grade for their final paper was determined. It is expected, that having such indications could help the heads of study programmes address the issue in a systematic way, discuss it with student representatives and possibly start guidance towards the final paper earlier. Students have a right to appeal with regards to their assessment and the Student Council can help students in filing the appeal as well as sitting on the Appeals Commission. The University could improve its focus on the assessment of the learning outcomes for each programme by going more deeply into evidence found through direct assessment (actual student work product) in addition to the current approach which emphasizes indirect assessment through student surveys. A focus could also be placed on making improvements in the curriculum on the basis of assessment results. Professors and academic units can be encouraged to make such improvement a regular part of their program for improving educational effectiveness. The formal program review process could incorporate the achievement of student learning outcomes as a part of the process with a focus on areas of needed improvement.

TU is implementing a system of taking into account prior learning and work experience. The system is described in the self-assessment report and was presented to the team by the academic staff members. Description of the procedure can be found online (in Estonian and partly Russian). Little or no information is available in English. Interviewed students had no experience of the RPL system, despite one of them having started the Bachelor's degree in TU after a year of studies in another Estonian university (credits achieved elsewhere were not taken into account). This suggests, that possibly TU could make the information about RPL more student-friendly (according to TU data 67% Bachelor level students and 83% Masters level students are aware of RPL).

Commendations:

- Great awareness and appreciation towards capacity building actions under PRIMUS programme
- Flexibility in arranging study process – in particular the ability to modify assessment procedures in line with projected learning outcomes

Areas of concern:

- Relatively high drop-out rate, as well as extended period for completion (national trend)
- Sustainability of teacher/ support staff training programme after PRIMUS funding finishes
- Limited student financial support in terms of grants or loans

Recommendations:

- More systematic approach to detect risk of drop-outs and subsequent intervention needed (possibly a university-wide or even national retention policy, taking some good practice from foreign institutions, experiencing similar challenges i.e. working students)
- Targeting drop-outs to persuade them to come back, potentially recognise some of their experience gained at work, so they could complete their studies
- Developing a more systematic approach to the assessment of learning outcomes by professors and academic units bolstered by regular program review with an emphasis on making improvements in course offerings through direct assessment results

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

The organisation of studies creates an opportunity for students to complete their studies within the standard period.
A higher education institution provides students with counselling related to their studies and career.
A higher education institution supports student international mobility.

Modern technical and educational technology resources are used to organise educational activities. Students are periodically asked for feedback on learning and support processes (the organisation of studies, assessment, counselling, etc.); the results of surveys are taken into account in improvement activities.

According to the TU regulations, the organisation of studies creates an opportunity for students to complete their studies within the standard period. However, as described in the self-assessment report, the dropout rate is relatively high (particularly for PhD students). There is a serious concern with regards to overall completion times and numbers of students on academic leave (23.5% for 2008/09). The interviews helped to clarify the causes for low retention rates, which are related to early employment. Several employees indicated that they do not need graduates, but talented young people, whom they could train at work. Majority of students responded, that they work to be able to pay their bills, since there is no (or little) student support available. Some students claimed that they lack practical skills orientation during their studies, so find it important to get closer links to the labour market from early days. While TU management is clearly addressing this problem, there seem to be disagreement among the heads of academic units whose responsibility is to address the low retention rates and whether stricter entrance requirements would solve the problem, so that ideally only motivated students are admitted. Among teaching staff and administrative staff as well as the Student Council there seem to be a consensus, that it is important to continue with current practices, like academic counsellors being available for students or student-counsellors.

During the visit the panel learned about TU services to provide students with counselling related to their studies and career. Meeting with the TU staff helped the panel to get a better understanding about academic counselling available to students. At every unit there are special academic counsellors, as well as student representatives. Sometimes students can handle their concerns or complains directly to the Academic Auditor, which makes sure that academic units keep up with TU regulations.

Meeting with the career counsellor in the Career and Counselling service revealed that this service is popular among students, with approximately 1.200 people turnover per year, using the services of the counsellor, the psychologist and the academic counsellor/senior specialist of study management. The career counsellor is providing advice on employment, as well as on designing the learning path according the career aspirations. While in itself this is a positive service, it is important to ensure that quality academic counselling is available for all students during their studies on the level of an academic unit or study programme. The Career service office is also trying to reach out to the alumni, organising events. However, not all the alumni are currently subscribed

to the relevant mailing lists to receive information due to the fact, that they cannot keep university mail long after graduation.

Support for student international mobility is one of the key priorities for TU, as elaborated in its Development Plan and Key Indicators. The policy commitment for internationalisation was reiterated during a number of interviews, with academic and support staff, students. TU has signed over 60 partnerships with international institutions, is active in various international networks. In addition, there are 500 Erasmus agreements signed by academic units. TU seems to be keen on embracing the “internationalisation at home” approach, while 8% of its staff come from foreign universities, next to, on average, 5% of students. PhD students constitute the majority of these international students with around 10% of foreign students). Outbound mobility rates are rather low (on average 1.8%), with PhD students being least mobile contrary to the policy objectives. While the institution is devoting efforts to promote mobility by providing relevant information (i.e. interactive tool available in the information centre), there are some structural barriers, related to student workload, availability of financial support and recognition of credits issues. These were the main obstacles identified by students, when they were asked why they were not considering participating in academic exchanges. There are mobility options available for teaching and support staff, however there is significantly less interest to participate in lengthy programmes, rather than attending conferences or symposia.

TU has an extensive track record in organising various summer schools, attended by the international students, particularly in the field of media. Such practice can help to raise the international profile of an institution, attract prospective students and researchers. TU is involved in a number of joint degrees, including one in the field of Law studies. The Baltic Film and Media School is the only institution in Northern Europe providing courses in film, TV and media in English, with nearly 25% of its students coming from outside Estonia.

Modern technical and educational technology resources are available to support the teaching and learning process. TU took great advantage of various (mostly EU) funds available to modernise its resources, such as classrooms, laboratories, information centre, recreational areas and other. During the assessment visit, the panel had an opportunity to visit the main TU campus and Haapsalu College, as well as meet local staff and students, main users of the facilities.

Students are periodically asked for feedback on learning and support processes (including the organisation of studies, assessment, counselling, etc.). The response rate for this is around 25%. Feedback on courses is compulsory and the response rate for this is 95%. TU is considering lowering the number of mandatory course feedback evaluations, hoping it would improve the quality and depths

of the answers. The answers of those reviews are collected and analysed on the study programme level, however data are available on the central administration level as well.

A representative from the administration showed the panel a pilot version of an intranet database, where TU staff members' profile is linked with all relevant information (like publications, workload) as well as assessment results. All teachers, as well as support staff, interviewed by the panel were aware of the student feedback. A number of students stated that they saw positive changes after some of the (negative) evaluations, for example, changing the theory and practice ratio or replacing a professor. According to TU administration, outcomes of the survey are taken into account when designing the training plan for academic staff to enhance their didactical skills. While the training sessions themselves are being attended mostly by teachers, who are well-regarded by students in terms of their teaching capacity, it is important to think of a mechanism to get some of the training (i.e. dealing with students with special needs) for all teaching staff.

Commendations:

- Student council – efficient support structure, for both domestic and international students
- Infrastructure fit for purpose, particularly facilities for innovative learning (simulating research processes, collaborative learning)
- Relatively high proportion of international staff (around 8%)
- Good teaching is being rewarded by students
- Comprehensive student counselling service for careers and study guidance, undertaken by trained staff, by academic staff, and by students
- Successful alumni

Areas of concern:

- Relatively high drop-out rate, as well as extended period for completion (national trend)
- Credits gained during mobility programmes were not always recognised by the University when, as sometimes happens, students change their courses and thereby alter the Learning Agreements. Students need to be better informed of the consequences of not keeping to their Learning Agreements.
- Low outbound mobility (few domestic students go abroad)
- Very low PhD outbound mobility rates, too far from target (Development Plan)

Recommendations:

- Analyse the reasons for relatively low outbound mobility numbers (particularly for PhD) and take subsequent action
- Seek ways of increasing the numbers of students who participate in exchange programmes. Seek ways to make such exchange programmes affordable.

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

General comments:

Although TU is recognized mostly by its high commitment to teaching that was recognised by the Committee and confirmed by meetings with staff and students, it undertakes considerable research activities. Research is specifically identified as an ambition in the Self-Assessment Report and is included in TU’s Development Plan for the next 5 years as the creation of knowledge to sustain the strategic goals of TU.

3.1 RDC effectiveness	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has defined its RDC objectives and measures their implementation.</i> <i>A higher education institution monitors the needs of society and the labour market, and considers them in planning its RDC activities.</i></p>								
<p>Research is included in the mission and highlighted in the vision of TU: TU’s ambition is to be an innovative centre of research and education, recognized internationally. The institution has undertaken significant infrastructure investment in recent years to support this goal.</p>								

The TU strategy lists 5 broad objectives: develop interdisciplinary research; increase research-based teaching and enhance doctoral studies; increase knowledge transfer; create a better research environment inside TU; and increase research funds (SAR, p. 48). The development plan 2015-2020 includes enhancing strategic areas of research.

General research indicators for basic research (publications, grants, conferences, etc.) are gathered across the Academic Units in the various research fields and are analysed centrally. These indicators have experienced a positive trend since 2010 and some are similar to those of other universities (i.e., the number of indexed publications per academic employee is similar to U. Tartu and Tallinn Technological University; SAR p. 50). However, TU could improve its knowledge of the scientific impact of its research.

Applied research is concentrated in some areas where societal needs are clear (traffic; Informatics; Education). TU conducts discussions with business partners and external stakeholders in the local employment market, and several of these representatives (in conversation with the Committee) asserted that the skills provided in the curricula meet their employment requirements.

We could not find a clear strategy for strengthening applied research (which was supported by the Innovation Vouchers, no longer available). The present structure of TU in many independent Units makes it more difficult to devise and implement an institutional strategy. Domain Councils are at present discussing these issues.

Recommendations:

- TU should design policies to promote the quality of publications rather than numbers (measured in impact factors, citations or other internationally accepted ways of measuring quality), thus facilitating the acquisition of competitive grants by TU researchers. It is also recommended that specific areas of research be identified, where excellence can be attained, and the primary focus, in the immediate future, should be on those target areas of expertise.
- TU should increase the efforts to develop a long-term research profile linked to present strengths and to opportunities related to the country and ministerial priorities for development.

3.2 RDC resources and support processes	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has an effective RDC support system.</i> <i>A higher education institution has financial resources needed for RDC development and a strategy that supports their acquisition.</i> <i>A higher education institution participates in different RDC networks.</i> <i>RDC infrastructure is being updated and used effectively.</i></p>								
<p>TU has a Research Administration Office and a Knowledge Transfer Centre, under the strong and committed leadership of the Vice Rector for Research.</p> <p>The Office supports individual researchers in grant seeking and in managing projects. TU has a Research Fund (600.000€) allocated to specific actions on a competitive basis. Most researchers seem to benefit from this fund and are satisfied with the procedure and its transparency.</p> <p>TU academic staff is hired and promoted with significant emphasis given to research performance, and economic incentives and institutional recognition are given based on the quality of research output. The teaching load is generally reasonable, allowing time for research; research is clearly recognized and appreciated in the university. It is also considered, as verified in conversation with the academic staff, for contractual retention and promotional opportunities. It should be noted, however, that almost half of the teaching staff does not have a PhD (personnel tables in the SAR); many of these individuals are currently engaged in doctoral studies, generally within TU (as evidenced in interviews with the academic staff). The research performance of TU would improve if these employees would have more facilities to pursue their research.</p> <p>Regarding financial resources needed for RDC development and a strategy that supports their acquisition, the Research Office supports the procurement of Estonian institutional grants by helping create competitive internal networks from different Units and simulating an evaluation process prior to submission of proposals.</p>								

This Office also supports academics in their networking activities when directed to apply for EU grants.

Grants, however, are still scarce at TU and overall funds for research are limited, which is a threat for the sustainable development of research activities. During the interviews, many researchers expressed the concern that their work was in danger if the situation does not change. The Research Office stated that it is the intention of TU to apply for participation in Horizon 2020 projects, and this would seem a reasonable approach to assuring research support on a pan-European basis for TU staff.

TU is part of relevant international networks, for example, the EUA, UNICA, IAU (SAR, p. 52) but the Committee took the view that while these networks were important they were not in themselves research networks, and the University might want to seek partners with similar research interests in particular areas.

Many researchers have individual international collaborations (interviews).

State of the art research infrastructures have been acquired in the last years with structural EU funds and Ministry grants. Facilities include IT equipment for the academic staff as well as fully equipped research laboratories. They may well last for several years but technical obsolescence will mean that procurement of maintenance/replacement funds should be planned by the University.

Commendations:

- TU research fund helps researchers solve immediate problems and survive through periods in between grants, for what the Committee commends TU.
- The Research Office supports the procurement of Estonian institutional grants by helping create competitive internal networks from different Units and simulating an evaluation process prior to submission of proposals. This has been a successful strategy of the Research Office, securing 6 such grants at present, for which the Committee commends the University.

Recommendation:

- To ensure that academic staff have time slots fully dedicated to research; promote team building; start mentorship programs

similar to those in teaching; allocate funds or seek more external resources for meaningful mobility of researchers; and promote collaborative research among academic staff and doctoral students.							
3.3 Student research supervision	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution includes students of all academic cycles in research, creative or project activity; and systematically surveys student satisfaction with their supervision.</i> <i>Professionalism, effectiveness and the workload of supervisors are reasonably balanced, which ensures the quality of research papers and positive graduation rates.</i> <i>Students are guided to recognize plagiarism and to avoid it.</i> <i>Conditions have been created for admission of international doctoral students and for studies abroad for all doctoral students.</i> <i>A higher education institution includes recognised foreign scientists in the provision of doctoral studies and the supervision of doctoral theses.</i></p>							
<p>Programmes in all cycles include a final thesis, although to what extent this final thesis is research-based at the Bachelor or even the Master level was not clear to the Committee. An annual Research Week was organised for the first time in 2012 in which various seminars, briefings and workshops were organised. The aim of the event is to introduce research to students in different forms and to offer ideas and additional information for writing a bachelor or master thesis.</p> <p>During the interviews that the Committee had with them, PhD and Master students declared that they were satisfied with their supervisors, who did not seem to feel overloaded. However, the Committee took the view that the doctoral studies at TU could be greatly enhanced. Since PhD candidates are the basis for present and future research in all universities, their training should be the best possible.</p> <p>The many Doctoral programmes in TU are scattered through the academic Units with little if any connection to each other. While some PhD students are part of a research group, others are isolated and have only contact with their supervisors. Many PhD</p>							

students are part-time because their allowances are too low, but nearly all PhD students have to work to supplement their income. All this leads to a lengthy thesis preparation time and results in frequent dropouts, a trend that is not helped by the requirement of 3 full papers in peer-reviewed journals before the thesis can be defended; this requirement can be too demanding in some fields/Units (such as Units with more teaching load or less financial and human resources).

Students and alumni affirmed in conversation with the Committee that they were taught to identify plagiarism; they also stated that they were informed that they would be held accountable for any detected plagiarism. Plagiarism detection appears to be the individual responsibility of the instructor himself or herself.

International doctoral students are welcomed at the University and numbers have increased year on year since 2010. There is commendably high number of foreign staff in the Institution (8.7% of full-time academic staff).

The inclusion of recognised foreign scientists in the provision of doctoral studies and the supervision of doctoral theses should be ensured by the high proportion of international academic staff at TU international collaborations. However, the Committee has no evidence of a regulation in TU ensuring this point. The percentage of current foreign staff is strong, yet their specific allocation to doctoral study supervision is unclear. Where applicable, external co-mentors might provide external support and expertise to TU doctoral mentors.

Recommendation:

- TU should consider creating one or several Doctoral Schools, bringing together all PhD students and undertaking some joint activities for all of them (discussion clubs, seminars, summer school, social activities, etc.). Supervision Committees should also be organized, to ensure that each PhD student has broader academic advice and available support in cases where conflicts with the main supervisor might appear. Funds should be found to support students so they can work full-time on their thesis (or time free-of-teaching for those who are lecturers at TU). Grants for at least one short stay abroad per student should also be secured.

4 SERVICE TO SOCIETY

General comments:

TU has set the objectives for services to society according with the University strategy and TU Development Plan until the year 2014. “Enriching society through sharing knowledge”. The strategy includes participation of the University partners in different level decision making processes and evaluation for example participating in national and international networks, boards, strategic planning, public debates and offering cultural events; alumni work, cooperation with private and public sector in the fields of R&D and creative activities, popularizing University results; development of regional competence centres and development a web environment in order to make the University available to public.

TU popularizes its core activities in social development, provides in-service training and other educational activities for the public as well as different kind of public-oriented activities. The University has a system to produce these services. Current assessment methods to evaluate quality and effectiveness of main societal activities are at the developing stage. Satisfaction surveys and feedbacks have been used in a very traditional way to improve services. So far, TU has not carried out any scientific research about societal impacts of the University.

On the basis of the reports and the interviews TU has plenty of current evidence of providing a rich variety of services to society. The University has also a good potential and a high staff commitment to develop further these activities for the Estonian society. Public relations and personal relationships are working well and seem highly appreciated in Estonia. Informal interaction can help the University to fulfil the needs of society, but this system might be vulnerable and unsuited to guarantee sustainability of public relations. Documentation of the processes would be useful, so that there is clear evidence on paper of the kind of work that is being undertaken across the University.

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

TU has a system based on strategies, development plans and regulatory documents to popularize its core activities. The goal is to be an effective and valuable partner in society by sharing knowledge within Estonia and also abroad. The main guideline document by The University Institutional Development Office includes responsibilities and action periods for developing university identity and activities aimed at members, promoting social relations and partnership and general prerequisites for achieving goals of the various actions.

The key indicators of service to society are the number of published textbooks and publications of popular science, including those also in Estonian (the number in 2012 was 194 and the trend in 2014 is growing). Another key indicator is the number of conferences and both academic and cultural events, a total of 334 in 2012. Modern and excellent university building and all the needed facilities including top-level conference organizer specialists have allowed the organization of national and international conferences both for TU and for clients outside the university. There is good evidence on The Conference Centre's services to society. In 2012, the University Conference Centre supported a total of 105 projects, including the organization of 26 events for TU units and 79 for external clients.

Surveys and consultations are taken into account to design and offer research and development services by academic units in Educational Sciences, Humanities, Fine Arts, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Health Sciences. Academic employees delivered a series of one-minute lectures on their research which are available in Estonian on the web (the videos were warmly received and were watched about 3000 times). The one-minute lecture series received awards for popularising research in Estonia. "Studia Generalia" – lectures offer the members of TU and the public opportunities to listen to the academic lectures of Estonian and foreign scholars.

The number of speeches by so-called university key speakers was 2500 in 2010 (based on the 2012 reputation study of TNS EMOR).

During the interviews, the Committee listened to several examples of services to society indicating that school teachers, parents and pupils have opportunities to take part in different kinds of counselling, educational occasions, university visits and events. Secondary school students have an opportunity to prepare themselves for university studies through the courses of the Student Academy. One interesting example is also the Student Shadow Project. The University has "an open door day" of Laboratory for secondary school teachers and students. The Humanities offer services to society e.g. regarding cultural heritage and cultural consultations, language

exams, developing language plays and linguistic games etc.

TU has good evidence about active participation of university employees for planning, implementing and assessing national strategies, a total of 33 national work groups and 16 international work groups in 2011. For example, TU participated in the introduction of The Strategy for Traffic Safety in Estonia. The University participates in the working group Lifelong Learning Strategy, Sustainable Estonia 21 and Development Plan of Information Society.

The number of TU graduates that have joined the TU Alumni list is fairly low (1500 names in 2012). The Committee found that there is a real need to create a lively Alumni network, database and action plan.

To improve marketing and awareness of TU and its multiple services to society The University Marketing and Communication Office, The Knowledge Transfer Centre, The University Press and The University Library undertake active support. The main traditional tools are the TU web and newsletter, but the university has recognized a great need to develop new and more innovative formats (social media, a better Web and TU TV) particularly aiming internationally.

The last statistic of media mentions of TU in years 2011 - 2013 varies between 3942 – 4489 media mentions per year.

Commendations:

- The University has a system to popularise its core activities, and those activities are visible and highly acknowledged in the society.
- The staff indicates its good commitment to outside society by giving its expertise, consulting, supervising, teaching, etc.

Recommendations:

- To grow further awareness on its services to society. TU should consider developing innovative marketing and popularizing methods, including a distinct space on the website devoted to information about societal services that is easy to find and attractive.
- To develop assessment methods from traditional feedback surveys towards more scientific impact evaluation of services to society.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop TU alumni network and database connected with services to society. 							
4.2 In-service training and other educational activities for the general public	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has defined the objectives regarding in-service training and measures their implementation. In-service training is planned in accordance with the needs of target groups as well as with the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education. Participant satisfaction with the quality of in-service training is regularly surveyed and the results are used in planning improvement activities.</i></p>							
<p>The Development Plan until the year 2014 states that TU “will organise lifelong learning by being open, as much as possible, to different target groups, through opportunities for prior learning, re-training and further studies an offering diverse forms of study originating from the needs of different target groups”. According to the Self-Assessment Report in-service training includes open university supply and continuing education, CE. Several units of TU are offering these educational services in the Open University and Continuing Education Centre according with the TU Regulations for Continuing Education. TU offers CE in all study fields of the university although there are great differences by study fields.</p> <p>The key indicators are numbers of students who participated in CE and percentage of income/turnover of CE in the budget.</p> <p>TU claims to be the oldest and largest organization in Estonia having CE since 1976. Approximately 15.000 people participated in open university studies and continuing education in 2012. The total number of courses was 628. The demand for CE has remained steady at the same level compared to the previous years. The Annual Report of 2012 states that the university has achieved its objectives.</p> <p>The target groups for in-service training have been defined. The Centre for Continuing Education is the largest institution in Estonia providing CE courses for the staff of kindergartens, pre-school, general education and vocational school teachers as well as principals and vice-principals of the named institutions. It has a long tradition in teacher training and education. The interviews indicated very</p>							

well the importance of TU in offering and developing further teacher training in Estonia. Changes in learning environments will increase the demand for continuous professional development of teachers such as information technology in teaching and learning. Education itself is the biggest field of CE. The turnover was about 1 million euros in 2012, approximately 71 % of the total CE . A European Social Funded (ESF) - project has given great opportunities to develop new courses in education, but in the future it will be challenging to get funds for pedagogical innovations. Increasing competition in Estonia was voiced in interviews, which means that marketing operations for in-service training have to be analysed for the needs of future university clients.

The mission of the Open University at TU is “to create an environment for lifelong learning and to offer high quality customized in-service training and conference services for partners”. It offers as well as an access to ECTS degree studies, in regular courses together with degree students without being an actual student on working days or arranged for distance students. Open learning is offered on the basis of a user-pay system. Open University organizes also open lectures and preparatory studies in the Student Academy.

Remarkable differences can be seen in the number of courses and students as well as in the turnover amongst different academic study fields. As said before, the highest number was in Education. In Health and Sports the number of courses was 30 (1635 students), in Humanities 22 (688 students), in Arts 21 (538 students), Natural Sciences 8 (136 students) and Social Sciences 7 (192 students). As indicated in the Self-Assessment Report there is a requirement for more engagement and motivation tools to study how to invite the best experts and academics to collaborate in CE. Inside the TU there is a need to develop coordination, maybe also to clarify and to develop organisational structures to support the interaction between Academic Units and CE actors.

As one concrete example and an example of good practice of in-service courses the Institute of Health Sciences and Sport introduced to the Committee a course called “Training with knowledge” targeted at coaches, sportsmen on different levels and parents. The course was supported by the Tallinn Government and Sports-For-All in Estonia Olympic Committee, by the sports medicine cluster SportEst. The duration was two semesters in 2013, and it enrolled circa 1100 participants.

When assessing the satisfaction of the quality of in-service training, mainly traditional methods of quality assurance are used, such as feedback questionnaires in order to collect information from participants for developing CE courses and study programmes.

Commendation:

- Academic units, sub-units and other units are delivering their expertise to society in their own academic fields.

Recommendations:

- Brand development of academic services towards Lifelong Learning Tallinn University might be considered in the next stage. “The Third Mission of TU” besides research and teaching can offer a unique entity of respectable societal services.
- The University should consider developing better collaboration, benchmarking best practices and promoting interdisciplinary activities involving its academic fields and units.

4.3 Other public-oriented activities	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:

Public-oriented activities are purposeful, the results of the activities are periodically evaluated, and improvements are introduced based on those evaluations.

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

Other public-oriented activities are implemented and developed pursuant to the Development Plan and TU Strategy. Services to society are analysed and described in the Self-Assessment Report and in the Annual Report 2012. In the two last years public-oriented services have increased. The Marketing and Communication Office has a system to follow and evaluate the amount of media coverage of TU. The Committee heard that TU has achieved greater visibility in the last two years. However, it was not clear to the Committee whether particular areas of activity had been prioritised for future planning.

The Academic Library of TU is one of the most comprehensive research libraries in Estonia. It was founded in 1946 as the Central Library of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. The registered number of readers amounts to nearly 50.000. The number of external readers was 26753 in 2012. The library has 100 employees, and is providing services to researchers, other readers, scholars and to

the people in general.

The statutes of TU Press (2.1.) state: “The primary task of TU Press is to publish high quality and well edited and designed academic and intellectual literature proposed by the departments and affiliates of TU”. The Committee heard in the site visit that TU Press has become one of the leading publishers of academic literature in Estonia on the basis of the number of books published (22 books in 2012) and by quality and prestige. The publications of TU Press have been nominated for the Estonian Cultural Capital annual awards.

All publications are evaluated by a Field-specific Board composed of non-TU scholars, who select 2-3 referees to ensure peer review of all publications (including translations).

The University Conference Centre organized a total of 26 events for TU units and 79 events for external clients in 2012 (see above 4.1). Since 2006 TU Summer / Winter Schools have been organized and targeted at the international public in cooperation with other universities in Tallinn. A three-week programme in June and in January includes several courses with a fascinating cultural programme and recreational trips. In 2013 from 49 different countries, the total number of participants was 320. The Committee was convinced that the Summer School has a well-known image and it is working actively with the UNICA network of Summer Schools.

The Baltic Film and Media School was introduced to the Committee as a new innovation of TU. Film performances are presented regularly also to the public.

TU’s contribution to enhancement of community welfare is remarkable, a rich variety of cultural and other public-oriented activities, such as university choirs and other concerts, a variety of different exhibitions and performances. The University has a long tradition of providing those activities.

TU can also rent film equipment and rooms to the public. The University College in Haapsalu offers their reconstructed rooms of wood and metal design to local and regional public.

Haapsalu College was established in 1998 by TU in co-operation with Lääne County and Haapsalu Town Government to attend to regional needs. The College is implementing very good practices about public relations between TU and regional actors. Haapsalu College is a driving force in regional development through training and development projects - Applied Computer Sciences (Multimedia), Health Manager, Traffic Safety and Handicraft Technologies and Design. TU Haapsalu College has been managing The

Health Promotion and Rehabilitation Competence Centre (TERE) since Dec 2010 until Dec 2014.

Commendations:

- The University has good facilities and very professional staff to organize conferences, Summer and Winter schools, cinema and other academic and cultural events.
- Public oriented activities are greatly appreciated by the clients.

Recommendation:

- To consider what current public-oriented activities are the most highly prioritized in the following years of the University strategy.