

Decision Regarding Institutional Accreditation University of Tartu

18/06/2015

The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to accredit the University of Tartu for seven years.

The Assessment Committee decided to recognise progress in the Organisational management and performance assessment area with an additional note of “worthy of recognition”, especially identifying the Management of financial resources and infrastructure.

Assessment Committee

Gillian Mary King - Chair	Higher Education Consultant	UK
Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen	President of Euroscience and Vice-President of European Universities Association	Denmark
Tõnu Pekk	Entrepreneur, CEO of SAGA Family Office	Estonia
Kert Pütsepp	Student, University of Cambridge, King`s College	Estonia
Barbara A. Sawrey	Dean, University of California, WASC Liaison Officer	USA

Component Assessments

Organisational management and performance	Conforms to requirements
Teaching and learning	Conforms to requirements
Research, development and/or other creative activity	Conforms to requirements
Service to society	Conforms to requirements

Strengths, Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

Organisational management and performance

Strengths

- *The development plan and related action plans reflect the University's mission, vision and core values as well as national priorities and society's expectations at large.*
- *Collaboration between the University and its regional Colleges allows them to respond effectively to regional needs.*
- *Students are successfully involved in governance of the University.*
- *Documentation regulating the University's activities is clear and competent and made easily accessible to the public.*
- *Worthy of recognition is the University's secure and effective financial management, for example its wise use of EU funding, in particular in using it to build and renovate teaching facilities.*
- *The University's infrastructure is excellent and there is a growing satisfaction among the teaching staff and students with the working environment.*

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

- *The University should implement its proposed procedures for academic staff evaluation consistently, fairly and without delay.*
- *The University should ensure that development interviews are conducted with all employees.*
- *The University should develop uniform guidelines for ethical behaviour for all of its staff.*
- *Continued attention should be given to reducing the gender pay gap at the University.*
- *The University might consider allocating additional funds for development activities to compensate for changes in EU Structural Fund financing.*

Teaching and learning

Strengths

- *Graduates of the University are valued in the labour market and employers are pleased with their professional preparation. The University enrolment numbers are decreasing, but the student quality is increasing. This increasing quality of students is in alignment with a goal of the University to train Estonia's leading intellectuals.*
- *The University's buildings are also accessible to physically disabled people.*
- *The student support system is effective.*

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

- *It is critical to increase the number of programmes taught in English, either in addition to or in place of Estonian, to attract international students, and to make Estonian students more competitive globally.*
- *The University should better identify and support students with learning disabilities, building on the international best practices.*

- *The University should make the monitoring of students' academic progress (both credit accumulation and grade achievement) consistent across the faculties so that both students at risk of failure and those performing exceptionally well can be identified and supported early on.*
- *The University's career counselling service should be better advertised among students.*
- *Every effort should be made to promote international student mobility in both directions.*

Research, development and/or other creative activity

Strengths

- *The University conducts high quality research in many fields of study. All four of its research and development areas have been positively evaluated.*
- *Thanks to effective networking with students, alumni and employers, the University has a very good overview of labour market needs and other societal developments.*
- *The University's research support system is well developed, provides effective assistance to academic staff, for example in applying for project financing as well as in project management, and matches companies' needs with academic staff competencies.*
- *Effective research management has resulted in a significantly greater international competitiveness and cooperation in certain areas, and increased funding.*

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

- *A possible conflict between the University's mission as a national university which ensures 'the continuity of Estonian intellectuals and language and culture' and its vision to be a 'rapidly developing international research university' may hamper the realisation of the vision as the latter requires a focus to be set on selected areas.*
- *Potential risks that come with project-based (and therefore unevenly distributed) research funding should be mitigated across the academic spectrum.*
- *The University should systematically monitor the progress of doctoral students and create as favourable conditions as possible allowing them to complete their studies in a timely manner.*

Service to society

Strengths

- *The University of Tartu is well known in Estonia as both an educational and research institution and it actively popularises its core activities among different target groups.*
- *The University houses several institutions of national importance which could not exist without the University's support – the regional colleges, library, museums, observatory, botanical garden, etc.*

- *The University has a key role in the development of the city of Tartu and close collaboration with the city government within the framework of various projects, such as the AHHA Science Centre and Tartu Science Park.*
- *Close cooperation between the University and companies in Tartu as well as throughout Estonia benefits both the training of students and development of the Estonian economy.*

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

- *To motivate the staff to participate in community activities and to receive inputs for development interviews, it would be useful for the University to establish an appropriate monitoring system.*

Further information:

Assessment Report

Self-Evaluation Report