

**Decision Regarding Assessment of the Business and
Administration Study Programme Group
University of Tartu**

10/03/2017

The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu in seven years

On the basis of subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act, point 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA') and point 41.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', authorised in point 3.7.1 of the above-mentioned EKKA Statutes; the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 13.11.2015 the University of Tartu and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct a quality assessment of the study programme group.
2. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 21.10.2016, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at Tallinn University of Technology and the University of Tartu (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Peter Mason (Chair)	Professor, Bedfordshire University, UK
Joachim Gläser	Professor, SRH University Heidelberg, Germany
Kalevi Kyläheiko	Professor, Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland
Roger Levy	Professor, The London School of Economics and Political Science, UK
Turo Virtanen	Professor, University of Helsinki, Finland
Danute Rasimavičienė	Dean, Vilnius University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania
Margus Kastein	Employers representative, Estonia
Vanessa Roosmets	Student, Estonian Business School, Estonia

3. The University of Tartu submitted the following programmes for evaluation under the Business and Administration study programme group (along with the Economics programmes within the Social Sciences study programme group):

Economics and Business Administration (BA)
Economics and Business Administration (MA)
Business Administration (BA)
Business Administration (MBA)
Entrepreneurship and Technology Management (MBA)
Strategic Management (MBA)
Wellness and Spa Service Design and Management (MA)
Service Design Management (MA)
Entrepreneurship and Project Management (Prof HE)
Educational Management (MA)
Culture Management (Prof HE)
Culture Management (MA)

4. The University of Tartu submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 16.08.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 11.09.2016.
5. An assessment visit was made to the University of Tartu during 24–25.11.2016.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 31.01.2017, EKKA forwarded it to the University of Tartu for its comments on 1.02.2017, and the University delivered its response on 14.02.2017.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 20.02.2017. That assessment report is an integral part of the decision, and is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee's final assessment report along with the University's self-evaluation report to the Council members on 21.02.2017.
9. The Council with 7 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 10.03.2017 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu.

Assessment at the Level of the Study Programme Group

Strengths

- 1) The programme committees are working well. The work of the committees is documented and understandable to all partners. Focus group interviews are used to collect feedback from students.
- 2) A variety of appropriate assessment methods are used.
- 3) Teaching staff provide feedback to students and also respond to student feedback.
- 4) Staff members are readily available to students.
- 5) Teaching staff have adequate opportunities to participate in appropriate staff development courses.
- 6) Students are highly motivated and clearly value the content of their studies.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) A decrease in student numbers due to the demographic situation in Estonia, and reducing the relatively high student dropout rates, both need special attention when developing future strategies.
- 2) Organisation of studies must take into account the fact that more and more students work full time.
- 3) Preparation of students should take into account not only the needs of Estonia, but also the needs of the global labour market.
- 4) The idea of using an alternative option for the master's thesis that is needed to graduate from the University might be considered, but at the same time full achievement of all learning outcomes must be ensured. In case a master's exam is introduced as an alternative to the master's thesis, the learning outcomes of study programmes must also be reviewed, as they are currently not appropriate for the use of an exam.
- 5) Consideration should be given to offering more foreign language courses within the study programmes.
- 6) Only three study programmes currently have significant mobility. The student body could be more international.
- 7) Opportunities to use library facilities at the weekend should be improved, especially in view of the interests of students who work full time.
- 8) There should be more opportunities for teaching staff to gain international experience. A larger number of international lecturers should be involved in programme delivery.
- 9) It should be ensured that pedagogical skills of the part-time staff and practitioners would meet the university standards.
- 10) Teaching staff should be offered more staff development courses in thesis supervisions.
- 11) Programme managers should be given the time and financial resources to the extent needed for their work.
- 12) Measures should be taken to increase completion rates, especially in the master degree programmes.
- 13) The procedures for recognising prior learning and work experience (VÕTA) should be better explained to students.

Assessment at the Study Programme Level

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (BA and MA); BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (BA); BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA)

Strengths

- 1) Teaching and learning methods are modern and flexible, innovative approaches are used.
- 2) Teaching staff are committed and enthusiastic.
- 3) Development interviews are conducted regularly with the teaching staff.

Areas for development and recommendations

- 1) It should be ensured that teaching by the teaching staff be valued to an equal degree as their research. The system of appraising teaching staff, and its effects, should be made more transparent.
- 2) Teaching staff should collaborate more closely regarding programme development, programme delivery and research.
- 3) Steps should be taken to increase the number of international lecturers using, inter alia, Erasmus+ opportunities for this purpose.
- 4) A formal system should be introduced to record the reasons students drop out, in order to develop an action plan to prevent this.

- 5) A recommendation by alumni to include a course in public speaking skills in the study programme should be considered.
- 6) Feedback from employers should be collected on a more regular basis.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT (MBA); STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT (MBA)

Strengths

- 1) The study programmes have a good reputation among students and employers. The Strategic Management programme enjoys a close cooperation with the working world. The Entrepreneurship and Technology Management programme has its clear niche and is supported by employers.
- 2) A strength of the Strategic Management programme is the existence of a company that is its permanent cooperation partner in the teaching and learning process. A variety of teaching methods are used in the programmes. Practical and theoretical learning are closely interconnected in the programmes.
- 3) The flexible organisation of studies is highly appreciated by students.
- 4) Teaching staff have high qualifications and authority. The teaching staff is clearly committed to serving society.
- 5) Both students and programme leaders highly value the fact that the teaching staff includes successful entrepreneurs.
- 6) The study programmes are popular. The quality of applicants is high.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) A higher degree of internationalisation is needed in the study programmes. More courses should be taught in English and more international students and staff should be recruited.
- 2) Study programmes do not have any international MBA accreditation (EQUIS, AACSB or AMBA). Such accreditation should be pursued, particularly given that the Strategic Management programme targets the international market.
- 3) According to the students, learning materials for courses in finance and management should be updated. Also, methods of active teaching and learning should be used to a greater extent.
- 4) The designation of the Entrepreneurship and Technology Management programme as an MBA programme requires review, as it differs substantially from conventional MBA programmes and has an insufficient international dimension.
- 5) Planning for new generations of the teaching staff should be given priority in the Strategic Management programme.
- 6) Given the diversity of the student body in the Entrepreneurship and Technology Management programme, the system for recognising prior learning and work experience (VÕTA) should be employed to a greater extent, which would allow some students to be exempted from some of the base level courses.
- 7) The completion rate of the Master's theses should be increased.

WELLNESS AND SPA SERVICE DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT (MA, PÄRNU COLLEGE); SERVICE DESIGN MANAGEMENT (MA, PÄRNU COLLEGE); ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT (PROF HE, NARVA AND PÄRNU COLLEGES)

Strengths

- 1) The study programmes are well targeted to meet the needs of local and regional development. The Wellness and Spa Service Design and Management programme has the potential to compete internationally.
- 2) Extensive international cooperation ties underpin the MA programmes.

- 3) The learning conditions at the colleges are very good in general.
- 4) A wide spectrum of methods for active teaching and learning are used, including the potentials offered by the entrepreneurship laboratory at Narva College. The Wellness and Spa Service Design and Management programme has a strong focus on practice.
- 5) Teaching staff are motivated and have a clear vision of their social and educational missions.
- 6) Students highly value the flexible organisation of studies, which allows them to combine their studies with their working and family lives, and they also value the practical applicability of the programmes.
- 7) Students highly value the international mobility opportunities (including for practical training) in the Wellness and Spa Service Design and Management programme.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The role of entrepreneurial subjects should be strengthened in the professional higher education programme. Some of the courses should be reviewed in order to reduce overlaps among them.
- 2) More practical training places should be offered in the Service Design Management programme.
- 3) More employers should be involved in developing the professional higher education programme at Narva College.
- 4) The objectives of MA programmes should be more explicitly formulated.
- 5) Master's theses are insufficiently integrated into the whole programmes. Preparation for thesis writing should be an ongoing process throughout the study period.
- 6) Student feedback regarding poor quality of teaching in some management, finance and accounting subjects should be taken into account, and to recruit new teachers or to offer relevant in-service trainings to the current staff.
- 7) Given the difficulty of finding qualified teaching staff in Narva, means of engaging qualified staff from elsewhere should be sought, offering, inter alia, more online courses and video lectures.
- 8) Staff's pedagogical and professional development should be partially mandatory and be linked to the staff evaluation system.
- 9) Part-time staff members need more supervision and advice; the suitability of their qualifications needs to be assessed and the relevance of course content should be checked.
- 10) In spite of a large number of cooperation agreements, very few international lecturers are involved in delivering study programmes.
- 11) The ventilation system at Pärnu College must be improved. Also, there are too few computer classrooms in the College according to the students.

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MA)

In the 2017/18 academic year, the study programme will be closed in this format and merged with two other MA programmes (Educational Sciences and Early Years Educator).

Strengths

- 1) The study programme has been popular, attracting both practicing teachers and recent BA graduates.
- 2) The organisation of studies is flexible and allows for taking into account the interests of practicing teachers.
- 3) Teaching staff are sufficiently qualified, experienced and readily available to students. The teaching staff are engaged in self-development.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) According to the students, there is a shortage of suitable textbooks, especially in English. This should be taken into account when acquiring textbooks for the new study programme.

- 2) The study programme should be made more international. It would be advisable to use more international lecturers in the teaching process. Local teaching staff members should also be offered more international mobility opportunities.

CULTURAL MANAGEMENT (PROF HE; VIJANDI CULTURE ACADEMY); CULTURAL MANAGEMENT (MA)

Strengths:

- 1) The study programmes are highly rated by students, alumni and employers. The programmes have a very good reputation and competition for the student places is strong.
- 2) The study programmes are well equipped with e-learning materials.
- 3) Teaching methods used are varied and appropriate, and the organisation of studies is flexible.
- 4) Practical trainings are well organised, and the theoretical and practical studies are well interconnected.
- 5) Many of the staff members are practitioners and students value them highly.
- 6) Staff development interviews are conducted annually.
- 7) Students are highly motivated.

Areas for improvement and recommendation

- 1) Course materials (including case studies) must be reviewed on a regular basis, as some are quite outdated according to the students.
- 2) There is a shortage of larger lecture halls in Viljandi. Solutions need to be sought to this problem.
- 3) More work should be done in the areas of student mobility and internationalisation of teaching and learning. More courses should be taught in English.
- 4) Teaching staff should be allowed more time to engage in research, which is required of them.
- 5) Consideration should be given to making pedagogical skills development mandatory for practitioners who are involved in teaching.

It is advisable to analyse as to whether the number of staff members with PhDs is sufficient to enable students to achieve research-related competencies.

10. Point 41 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', establishes that the Quality Assessment Council shall approve an assessment report within three months after receipt of the report. The Council shall weigh the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations pointed out in the assessment report, and then shall decide whether to conduct the next quality assessment of that study programme group in seven, five or three years.
11. The Council weighed the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations referred to in point 9 of this document and found that the study programmes, the teaching conducted under these programmes, and development activities regarding teaching and learning conform to the requirements, and, on the basis of point 41.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education',

DECIDED

to approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu in seven years.

The decision was adopted by 7 votes in favour and 0 against.

12. The Bureau of EKKA will coordinate a date for the next quality assessment of the study programme group with the University of Tartu no later than 10.06.2023.

13. The Council proposes that the University of Tartu will submit an action plan to EKKA with regard to the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the report no later than 10.03.2018.
14. A person who finds that his or her rights have been violated or his or her freedoms restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding. A judicial challenge to this decision is possible within 30 days after its delivery, by filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

Tõnu Meidla
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council