

Decision Regarding the Assessment of the Environmental Protection Study Programme Group University of Tartu

15/03/2016

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

On the basis of subsections 12² (1) and 10 (4) of the Universities Act, point 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA') and point 41 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 Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of EKKA (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 3.12.2014 the University of Tartu and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct the quality assessment of the study programme group.
2. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 25.09.2015, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Life Sciences and Environmental Protection study programme groups in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu and the Estonian University of Life Sciences (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Laurent Counillon – Chair	Professor, University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis (France)
Olav Aarna	Advisor, Estonian Qualifications Authority (Estonia)
Dietwald Gruehn	Professor, TU Dortmund University (Germany)
Kari Keinänen	Professor, University of Helsinki (Finland)
Henricus Balthasar Joseph Leemans	Professor, Wageningen University (Netherlands)
Ana Maria Pelacho Aja	Professor, University of Lleida (Spain)
Adrian Stan	Student, The Victor Babes University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Timisoara (Romania)

3. The University of Tartu submitted the following programmes for evaluation under this study programme group:

Environmental Technology (BSc)

Environmental Technology (MSc)

4. The University of Tartu submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 25.09.2015 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 30.09.2015.
5. An assessment visit was made to the University of Tartu during 3–4.12.2015.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 4.02.2016, EKKA forwarded it to the University of Tartu for its comments on 5.02.2016, and the University delivered its response on 16.02.2016.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 7.03.2016. 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 7.03.2016.
9. The Council with 8 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 15.03.2016 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Environmental Protection study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu.

Assessment at the Levels of the Study Programme Group and the Study Programme

Environmental Technology (BSc, MSc)

Students were admitted to the BSc programme in Environmental Technology until the 2014/15 academic year. Starting with the 2015/16 academic year, this programme is being combined with a Geology study programme and its new name is Geology and Environmental Technology.

Strengths

- The study programmes are of high quality and prepare environmental engineers with good research skills.
- Starting with the 2014/15 academic year, joint master's seminars and joint pre-defences of most specialisations have been organised.
- New buildings (like *Physicum* and *Chemicum*) as well as their furnishings are excellent.
- Blended learning is widely used.
- Research articles derived from selected Bachelor's and Master's theses have been published in international peer-reviewed journals.
- Recognition of prior learning and work experience is well organised.
- Most teaching staff are highly competent in their areas as well as being internationally recognised scientists.
- The Facebook page on these programmes is worthy of recognition.
- Openness, a healthy critical attitude and an excellent command of English demonstrated by both students and alumni serve as evidence of a good university education received.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- The study programmes should include more practical courses and students should be provided with more opportunities outside the university for internships related to their specialisations.
- The technological component of the study programmes should be strengthened.
- The study programmes should be more interdisciplinary with wider social, economic and political context incorporated into them, to improve the employability of graduates.
- Data collection and analysing skills of students should be improved.

- To avoid overlap between subjects, communication and cooperation among the teaching staff in environmental technology should be improved.
 - Marketing of the programmes should be improved since admission numbers in the BSc programme are declining.
 - Learning conditions and resources should be improved in some auditoria, especially at 46 Vanemuise Street.
 - Funding for practical classes is insufficient; some costs are covered by research funds.
 - Only one programme manager with a 0.25 workload is assigned at present, which is insufficient to meet the needs of students. Allocation of more resources for programme management is needed.
 - Employers, practitioners and external lecturers should be more involved in both programme development and teaching.
 - All teaching staff members should contribute towards shaping a student-centred learning environment. Personal professional development of the teaching staff should be supported and their teaching skills improved.
 - The international dimension of the study programmes has not been sufficiently developed. International student mobility is quite low.
 - The dropout rate during the first year in the BSc programme is high.
 - Student counselling should be given more attention.
 - Students should be offered more scholarship options and financial support.
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 years, or in less than seven 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 programme, the teaching conducted under this programme, and development activities regarding teaching and learning conform to the requirements.
12. On the basis of the foregoing, the Council

DECIDED

to approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Environmental Protection 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 8 votes in favour. Against 0.

13. 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 15.06.2022.
14. 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 15.03.2018.
15. A person who finds that his or her rights are violated or his or her freedoms are 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 the decision may be submitted within 30 days after its delivery, 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