

**Assessment Report on Study Programme Group of
Languages and Cultures
University of Tartu**

05/02/2016

The Quality Assessment council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Assurance Organization for Higher and Vocational Education decided to approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Languages and Cultures study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at University of Tartu in 7 years.

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

1. On 4.12.2014 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 27.08.2015, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Languages and Cultures study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at University of Tartu, Tallinn University and EuroAcademy (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Committee’):

Malcolm Cook (Chair)	Professor Emeritus, Chair of the Modern Humanities Research Association
	(Great Britain)
Olesea Bodean-Vozian	PhD student, Moldova State University (Moldova)
Yves Gambier	Professor Emeritus, University of Turku (Finland)
Andrew Goodspeed	Professor, South East European University (Macedonia)
Jaakko Leino	Professor, University of Helsinki (Finland)
Irina Moore	Docent, University of Wolverhampton (Great Britain)
Raiyashree Pandey	Reader, University of London (Great Britain)

Malcolm Cook (Chair)	Professor Emeritus, Chair of the Modern Humanities Research Association
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3. University of Tartu submitted for evaluation the following study programmes from the Languages and Cultures study programme group:
 - English Language and Literature (BA)
 - English Studies (MA)
 - German Language and Literature (BA)
 - German Studies (MA)
 - Romance Studies (BA, MA)
 - Classical Philology (BA, MA)
 - Russian and Slavic Languages and Literatures (BA)
 - Slavic Studies (MA)
 - Scandinavian Studies (BA, MA)
 - Translation Studies (MA)
 - Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics (BA, MA)
 - Literature and Cultural Research (BA)
 - Literature and Theatre Research (MA)
4. University of Tartu submitted the self-evaluation report to EKKA Bureau on 10.07.2015 and the assessment coordinator sent the report to the Committee on 13.08.2015.
5. The assessment visit at University of Tartu took place on 7.-8.10.2015.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report the EKKA Bureau on 27.11.2015, EKKA forwarded it to University of Tartu for its comments on 30.11.2015, and the University delivered its response on 15.12.2015.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 23.12.2015. The 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 26.01.2016.
9. The Council with 8 members present discussed these received documents in its session during 5.02.2016 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Languages and Cultures study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at University of Tartu.

Study Programme Group Findings

Strengths

- The teachers who met with the committee expressed their support for the rearrangements taking place in University of Tartu's College of World Languages and Cultures.
- The language skills of students and teaching staff are excellent and there is a true sense of collegiality between them.
- The teachers are committed, competent and highly qualified.
- The study programmes are strong in content and well-structured.

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

- Considering the limitations of existing resources, more thought should be given to the reasonability of teaching narrow subject fields as full study programmes.
- The Formation of the College of World Languages and Cultures should allow formal and uniform procedures to take place in assessing students, certifying teachers, giving feedback, filing complaints and dealing with sanctions.
- The university needs to organize events that support the completion of studies and prevent drop-outs.
- The university should consider the creation of online courses, the introduction of videoconferencing and the reinforcement for wider use of Moodle.
- There should be more clarity regarding the contractual status of teaching staff for them to feel secure about their job positions.
- Due to the structural changes inside the university and the transition to open-ended contracts, it is recommended to develop a formal teachers' evaluation system that allows a yearly evaluation of the teachers' achievements and provides an understanding of their professional development needs.
- The BA programmes do not currently include internships and the only contact students have with working life happens on their own initiative and outside of study time. While the university is planning to increase the role of internships in the studies, it is recommended to include practical elements into the BA programme modules in order to get regular feedback from employers and analyse the needs of the labour market.
- In order to guarantee objectivity in assessing students and to give feedback regarding the achievement of learning outcomes, the university should implement a uniform and transparent assessment system (that could be based on the system of moderation and double marking that is used in many European universities). The assessment should be done by at least two teachers. Assessment criteria should be covered in both, syllabi and feedback questionnaires, and be comparable across a study programme group subjects. The new assessment should first be implemented as a pilot project that would lead the following university-wide discussion.

Russian and Slavic Languages and Literatures (BA), Slavic Studies (MA)

Strengths

- The study programmes are student-centred and flexible, in accordance with the labour market needs, support students' individual and social development and allow students to plan their studies based on personal interests and capabilities.
- The study programmes fit well into the structure of the College of World Languages and Cultures and the teachers of the department of Slavic Studies give regularly lectures on interdisciplinary and cross-cultural topics.
- The study programmes have diverse groups of students.
- The university library is well equipped with subject-specific resources and both, students and teachers, have good access to digital learning resources and databases.
- The teachers of the department are highly qualified (most of them hold a PhD degree). The teachers' high-level international research reflects also in their teaching. The department is clearly distinguished by their activeness and success in applying for research grants.
- The study programmes are broad-based and interdisciplinary and the renewed study

- plans work well. Several different language courses are joint into interdisciplinary modules that are taught in Estonian or English and available to all the students of the college.
- A variety of teaching methods is being used. Students valued highly the opportunities to have Skype talks with Russian writers and the chance to get a practical working experience in an editorial.
 - Students get feedback to their work fast and constructively. The discussion of evaluation results happens in an open and friendly atmosphere.
 - The study programmes support the acquisition of general competences (teamwork, project management, ICT skills).
 - Teachers take active part in academic mobility by teaching in other higher education institutions abroad and taking part of international conferences. Teachers from abroad are also part of the teaching staff.
 - Students are continuously giving positive feedback to the quality of teaching. Students find the teachers helpful, very professional, dedicated and responsive.
 - Students take part in mobility programmes and have excellent language skills in Russian and English.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

- The University has not implemented a formal system of notifying students about the feedback outcome and accordingly implemented changes. It is recommended to formalize the process of follow-up activities.
- The decreasing number of students is problematic. The underlying reasons of the problem need to be figured out and possible solutions need to be found. The international student body provides the department with many opportunities to market the study programme and these opportunities have not been used so far.
- In developing the study programmes, labour market need analysis and employers' feedback has not been taken into account.
- From conversations with teachers and students, it appeared that as a consequence of study programme restructuring, subject-specific modules have decreased. In future development of the study programme, it is important to make sure the focus doesn't diverge too much.
- The Master's programme does not include modules related to language politics and multilingual issues. It is recommended to integrate socio-political elements into subjects when possible and to analyse the position of Russian language in today's globalized world and its changing functions in the post-Soviet space.
- Students were worried about the increased amount of individual work. It is recommended to establish a system that allows the department to monitor and assess students' individual work.
- In order to limit drop-puts, it is recommended to organize info sessions about the contents of the study programme to high school students and to implement a tutoring system for freshmen. Also, the thesis topics should be more related to students' practical work experiences.
- In order to support the university's internationalization and reinforce incoming student mobility, the college should equip its website with links to former and current students' profiles and video interviews.

Translation Studies

Strengths

- Translation internships are well-organized and give students a good overview of future career prospects. When possible, prior working experience is counted in as internship and thus might shorten the length of studies.
- Students are provided with good mobility opportunities. A number of Erasmus contracts and co-operation deals are signed with foreign higher education institutions.
- The teacher-student ratio is very good, small study groups allow teachers to use teamwork and implement innovative pedagogical methods.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

- The translation studies' programme should regularly be renewed based on feedback from different parties. This requires a more systematic co-operation with employers.
- The planned learning outcomes should be described better across curricula and modules for students to clearly understand what kind of competences they are expected to develop.
- It is recommended to create a greater synergy between translation studies and literature programmes. For example, translation studies' programme should also offer translation courses to literature students to raise their awareness about the impact of translation on the development of literature in different countries.
- The publications related to translation are very limited. The teachers do not take enough part in international conferences. Teachers should be encouraged to publish more articles and take part in conferences.
- Assessment process and criteria focus too much on evaluating the outcome (translation) and the process of translating receives limited feedback. Clear connections between developed competences, learning outcomes and assessment criteria need to be created.
- Students need to be explained both before the studies begin, as well as in the curriculum why only legal, economic and technical translations are taught in the study programme.
- The number of international partners needs to increase.
- When adding community interpretation to the study programme, the opportunities to apply the acquired knowledge and skills in the labour market should be taken into consideration.
- Teachers should be provided with more professional development opportunities (including digital resources).
- In the future, both teaching competences as well as research competences should be taken into consideration when recruiting. The teachers should constantly develop their pedagogical skills and use interactive methods in their teaching.
- Teachers should be encouraged to complete their doctoral studies.
- The small number of students might endanger the sustainability of the study programme by constraining the group dynamics in learning and limiting the number of offered specializations.

Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics (BA, MA)

Strengths

- The study programmes have an international profile: many teachers and students from abroad are part of the community and both teachers and students take active part in mobility programmes.
- Many teachers are scientists with an international scope and publish articles in high-quality journals. Study programmes have a fruitful co-operation with different Finno-

- Ugric linguists in teaching and research activities.
- University of Tartu offers a chance to study subjects that are not taught anywhere else in Estonia, for example, computational linguistics.
- Three professorships of cultural studies were created in line with the study programmes and that has improved the financial situation of the department.
- As a positive development, native speakers of Estonian are expected to apply to study teaching Estonian as a second language on the BA level. This is compliance with the current needs of the society.
- Students are very motivated and satisfied with their studies and teachers.
- Study programmes have been widely marketed in schools all over Estonia. In order to raise potential students' awareness about the programmes, language competitions have been held for high school students.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

- It's an important challenge to persuade students who would like to become teachers to join the study programme.
- It's necessary to have a more effective co-operation with other higher education institutions. Considering the decreasing number of students, a co-operation with Tallinn University would allow for a bigger subject choice.
- The study programme of teaching Estonian as a foreign language needs more extensive marketing (in schools and through social media), specifically targeting native Estonian speakers.
- Different options should be considered for recruiting professor-level scientists in Finnish and Hungarian. Currently, the main responsibility for completing the programme lies in the hands of Finnish and Hungarian language lecturers.
- There is a lack of a systemic approach in assessing and developing teaching skills.
- Teachers who are yet to get their doctoral degree, should be encouraged to take part in research and continue their studies in the doctoral programme.

Literature and Cultural Research (BA), Literature and Theatre Research (MA)

Strengths

- The choice of subjects offered within the academically strong study programme is flexible and diverse. The choice of minor subjects is clear and justified.
- Students value good relations with teachers and teachers' supporting approach.
- The alumni reckon that the study programme prepared them well for working life as well as for further studies in Estonia or abroad.
- The teaching supports individual learning strategies.
- The engaging regional theme of the study programmes might be attractive to foreign students and encourage incoming student mobility.
- The academic personnel is high-level and rather young. Teachers are flexible and adaptive.
- The communication between leaders and teachers of the study programme is good.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

- The wording of study contracts needs to enable the transfer of credits acquired from a foreign university during a mobility programme to the academic transcript of the student.
- The organization of internships should be discussed with the curricula leaders and

- formalized. Currently the internship positions are found on students' own initiative.
- When evaluating the publications of the teachers, it should be considered that due to the specifics of the field, the articles are bound to be published in Estonian journals with a narrower scope and smaller influence.
 - It is recommended to conduct a survey about alumni employability.
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.
12. The Council

DECIDED

To approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Languages and Cultures study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at University of Tartu in 7 years.

The decision was made with 8 yea votes and 0 nay votes.

13. Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Assurance Organization for Higher and Vocational Education will agree the next study group quality assessment time with University of Tartu by 5.05.2022.
14. The council suggests University of Tartu to present Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Assurance Organization for Higher and Vocational Education their development plan considering the areas of improvement and suggestions by 5.02.2018.
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