

# Decision Regarding the Assessment of the Life Sciences Study Programme Group Tallinn University

18/06/2015

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

Tallinn University submitted the following study programmes for evaluation:

- Biology (with minor field of study) BSc
- Molecular Biochemistry and Ecology MSc

## Assessment Committee

Laurent Counillon (Chair)	University Nice-Sophia Antipolis (France)
Olav Aarna	Estonian Qualifications Authority (Estonia)
Maris Klavins	University of Latvia (Latvia)
Kari Keinänen	University of Helsinki (Finland)
Rik Leemans	Wageningen University (Netherlands)
Romanus Lenz	Nürtingen University of Applied Sciences (Germany)
Adrian Stan	Timisoara Dental Students Association, Student (Romania)

## **The Committee's Comments on the Study Programme Group**

### **Strengths**

- *The courses and teaching methods of BSc and MSc studies are in a logical sequence. The contents and workloads of different modules and courses are clearly defined, scientifically solid and consistent.*
- *By a strategic decision of the University, there is a large proportion of electives in both the BSc and MSc programmes. This differentiates these programmes from similar programmes of other universities and students appreciate it as they are able to assemble their own programme to a great extent. A large number of electives provide students with an opportunity to cope with various situations and requirements of the labour market.*
- *The MSc programme focuses on instrumental analysis, supported by modern laboratory equipment.*
- *The campus has been renovated with support from the European Structural Funds. Furnishings of the rooms for lectures and practical courses are excellent.*
- *The study programmes are delivered by very dedicated, highly qualified and motivated teaching staff who perform high-quality research.*
- *Student feedback on the study programmes is generally positive and is taken into account in the teaching process.*
- *Employers are pleased with students' knowledge and graduate employment rates are high.*

### **Areas for improvement and recommendations**

- *There is a big contrast between the substantial investments made in buildings and equipment on the one hand and the difficulties in meeting the running costs for the study programmes (especially for practical courses) on the other. Funding of costly practical courses can be made more efficient by better combining the existing modules and research.*
- *High-level research is performed only in a limited number of research fields and does not fully support all the subjects taught under the programme. This may limit opportunities for scientific careers of some teachers and become a problem mainly for MSc studies where more versatile research would offer more diverse research topics.*
- *Problem-based learning should be implemented in the BSc programme to a greater extent.*
- *The MSc programme should involve modern methods and techniques of molecular biology to a larger extent.*
- *By the end of the ongoing reform at the University, the focus of the study programmes should still remain clear enough to be understood by future employers.*
- *The students have difficulties getting access to specialty-related modern textbooks in English.*

- *The decreasing enrolment rates and increasing dropout rates should be analysed from the perspective of the quality and motivation of students, and of the quality criteria for research; the causes of the problem should be addressed.*
- *More effective academic counselling should be offered to the students, especially in BSc studies, to help them better orient within a wide range of elective courses and make correct choices.*
- *Students' contact with industry and private sector companies is very limited. A proactive approach is needed to build a better collaboration with the private sector: invite representatives of private companies into the study programme council, involve them in teaching, advertise the new modern infrastructure of the University, organize career days for the students, etc.*
- *The outward mobility of the teaching staff and students should be increased.*

Further information:

Assessment Report

Minutes of the Session of the Quality Assessment Council (in Estonian)