

**Decision Regarding the Assessment of the
Psychology Study Programme Group
Tallinn University**

13/06/2016

**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
Psychology study programme group in the first and second
cycles of higher education at Tallinn University
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 13.04.2015 Tallinn University 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 23.02.2016, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Psychology study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu and Tallinn University (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Jonathan James Loose – Chair	Director of Learning and Teaching, Heythrop College, University of London (United Kingdom)
Marcel A.G van Aken	Professor, Universiteit Utrecht (Netherlands)
Dalia Nasvytiene	Assistant Professor, Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (Lithuania)
Alessandra Re	Adjunct Professor, Università di Torino (Italy)
Inguna Zarina	Student, European Student Union, University of Latvia (Latvia)
Milvi Tepp	Employer representative, Chairman of the Board of Estonian Human Resource Management Association PARE

	(Estonia)
--	-----------

3. Tallinn University submitted the following programmes for evaluation under this study programme group:
Psychology (BA)
Psychology (MA)
Organizational Behaviour (MA; Business and Administration study programme group)
4. Tallinn University submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 18.01.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 10.02.2016.
5. An assessment visit was made to Tallinn University on 05.04.2016.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 4.05.2016, EKKA forwarded it to Tallinn University for its comments on 16.05.2016, and the University delivered its response on 30.05.2016.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 1.06.2016. 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 1.06.2016.
9. The Council with 9 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 13.06.2016 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Psychology study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at Tallinn University.

Assessment at the Level of the Study Programme Group

Strengths

- Both students and alumni are pleased with their studies, enthusiastic and feel that study programmes prepare them well for employment in their profession.
- Teaching staff are motivated and committed to their work.
- Employers and other stakeholders emphasise the steadily improving quality of graduates, and all who are concerned with these programmes should be commended.
- The learning environment provided for students, including the teaching facilities and technological and bibliographical resources, is modern and of very good quality.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- In order to support innovation in teaching, pedagogical skills of the teaching staff need to be systematically enhanced.
- Student mobility could be improved by employing more flexible procedures for transferring ECTS credits earned at other higher education institutions.
- A serious concern is the excessive workload of some members of the teaching staff. The teaching workloads should be more evenly distributed, leaving enough time for teachers to engage in specialised research. In order to ensure that the distribution of workloads among the teaching staff is fair and balanced, the staff management system should be reviewed and, if necessary, revised.

- It is advisable to develop a strategy to diversify the sources of income and ensure the financial sustainability of the study programme group.
- E-learning should be used in a systematic and regular manner in all modules to further support flexible learning and digital literacy.

Assessment at the Study Programme Level

Psychology (BA, MA)

Strengths

- The study programmes provide students with significant opportunities for interdisciplinary and independent study through a large number of diverse elective modules.
- Popularity of the study programmes enables the University to select only the best student candidates.
- Despite various pressures (labour market needs, professional standards, changes in the structure and management of the University), the ongoing study programme development has retained high academic standards.
- The teaching takes into account the students' needs and keeps in mind their holistic development.
- Since 2013, graduates of the MA programme in Psychology can apply for a EuroPsy qualification in one of three areas of specialisation (Educational Psychology, Clinical and Health Psychology, or Work and Organisational Psychology).
- Teaching staff includes experienced high-quality practitioners who provide consultations to governmental authorities (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education and Research).
- Students are successfully involved in research projects.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- It is recommended that the Institute of Psychology promote a partnership with the University of Tartu and seek mutually beneficial ways to collaborate. By effectively combining the strengths of these two universities, it could be possible to strengthen the competitiveness of Estonian psychology programmes in the international market as well.
- The Institute should form a clear vision for further development of study programmes and prepare a specific plan to implement that vision, taking maximum advantage of the existing strengths and ensuring that the competing objectives are achieved, such as the need for interdisciplinarity and individual study, accreditation for EuroPsy, and a consideration of the professional labour market needs.
- For further development of study programmes, detailed information is needed regarding the generic and professional competences required in the labour market. Therefore it is advisable to establish formal systems to identify the requirements of different stakeholders, and reconsider the current plan to enlarge the proportions of experimental psychology and neuropsychology in the study programmes.
- At present students do not obtain enough practical skills or practical experience in the course of their studies. Serious consideration should be given to increasing the proportion of practical training in study programmes, in line with EuroPsy and other professional standards. From a long-term perspective, additional funding for student practical training should be obtained from the government.
- All assessment tasks should be clearly described and associated with clear criteria made available to students prior to the start of a course. It should be ensured that all teaching staff understands the terminology used to describe assessments in a consistent manner.

- Active teaching and learning methods such as interactive work in the classroom, problem-solving sessions, role play and simulations of real-life situations should be employed more extensively.
- It is advisable to reduce the number of modules with small credit ratings.
- Internationalisation should be actively pursued to promote student mobility and to recruit international lecturers. To this end, it is advisable to teach more courses in English and collaborate with the University of Tartu with regard to international students.
- Stakeholders have expressed their need for more psychologists who could effectively work with Russian-speaking Estonian nationals. It would be advisable to consider this requirement during study programme development.
- Teaching staff should be provided with more favourable conditions for research. Collaborations with a variety of national and international partners should be established, fostered and formalised within the framework of the research projects.
- It is advisable to identify the reasons for the high dropout rate and seek ways to reduce it, including providing students with more substantial support for completion of their studies.
- Prospective students should be provided early on with detailed information on the Psychology programmes and the requirements for completion. A strategy to increase the attractiveness of the MA programme to prospective students should be developed.

Organizational Behaviour (MA)

Strengths

- This study programme provides an interesting opportunity to combine competences in the fields of psychology and management – a combination that enables the training of organisational leadership who is capable of self-assessment and innovation.
- Fierce competition for admission reveals the great popularity of this programme.
- Alumni satisfaction with chosen specialisations is high.
- Theoretical and practical courses are in good balance, and the learning and teaching methods are consistent with the objectives and intended learning outcomes of the programme.
- Students appreciate the practical orientation of the programme. Prominent practitioners and specialists in their fields participate in the teaching, representing different disciplines.
- Students are very pleased with the content of the programme and the quality of lectures. The flexible cyclical form of study well suits the students who work full time. Students are well informed about the expected learning outcomes and know which skills they want to acquire to be competitive in the labour market and implement a ‘softer’ approach to management.
- Students are involved in research projects and many of them will subsequently write their Master’s theses based on these projects.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- With regard to a plan to broaden the range of specialisations offered within the study programme, the existing resources of teaching staff should be assessed critically.
- Students’ different educational backgrounds should be taken into account when shaping the structure of the study programme. For example, the programme currently incorporates courses that require a basic education in psychology as a prerequisite for their completion.
- It is advisable to pay more attention to the teaching of qualitative research methods within the programme which students are also able to utilise in their theses.

- The objectives and the content of the specialisation modules should be better aligned.
 - For the sake of systematicness, the processes of collecting and analysing feedback from employers and students should be formalised.
 - Teaching and research functions should be more closely connected. At present the topics of the scientific publications and research projects of many teachers do not relate to the content of the courses they teach.
 - Although the programme has clearly set out research skills as one of the learning outcomes, only a small number of teaching staff holds a doctoral degree at present. Students should be more actively involved in research.
 - Regular pedagogical trainings should be conducted to harmonise the levels of the teaching skills of academic staff. Special attention should be given to improving the pedagogical skills of visiting lecturers.
 - International student mobility should be enhanced in every way possible.
 - It must be ensured that student workloads be relevant to the credit values offered.
 - Students should have a clear understanding of which assessment tasks and assessment methods contribute to their final marks. The assessment criteria must be transparent.
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, and

DECIDED

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

The decision was adopted by 9 votes in favour. Against 0.

12. The Bureau of EKKA will coordinate a date for the next quality assessment of the study programme group with Tallinn University no later than 13.09.2022.
13. The Council proposes that Tallinn University will submit an action plan to EKKA with regard to the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the report no later than 13.06.2017.
14. 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