

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

11/04/2017

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 Tallinn University 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 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 20.11.2015 Tallinn University 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 10.10.2016, 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 Estonian Business School, Tallinn University and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Tanja Dmitrovic – Chair of the Committee	Professor, Head of the Chair, Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Jaakko Pekka Juhani Lehtonen	Professor Emeritus, University of Jyväskylä, Finland
Anne Perkiö	Lic.Ed, Head of the Programme, Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Finland
Kotryna Peilauskaite	Student member of the Committee, University of Vilnius, Lithuania
Tõnu Pekk	Entrepreneur, Estonia
Muhammed Abdul Rauf	Head, School of Business, Wittenborg University of Applied Sciences, Holland

Simone Ella Gertrud Wesner

University of London, Birkbeck, United Kingdom

3. Tallinn University submitted the following study programmes for evaluation under the Business and Administration study programme group:
 - Advertising and Publicity Studies (BA)**
 - Marketing (BA)**
 - Public Relations (BA)**
 - Public and Business Management (BA)**
 - Communication Management (MA)**
 - Public Administration (MA)**
4. Tallinn University submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 9.10.2017 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 9.10.2017.
5. An assessment visit was made to Tallinn University on 08.12.2016.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 25.01.2017, EKKA forwarded it to Tallinn University for its comments on 6.02.2017, and the University delivered its response on 20.02.2017.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 23.02.2017. 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 23.02.2017.
9. The Council with 9 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 11.04.2017 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 Tallinn University.

Assessment at the Study Programme Group and Programme Levels

Strengths

- 1) The structural reform at Tallinn University (TU) has resulted in an increasingly interdisciplinary approach to student projects. Students can learn from each other and improve their skills. It also fosters collaboration between different study programmes and schools which may lead to an improvement in the quality of instruction throughout the University.
- 2) The study programmes at the Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School and the School of Governance, Law and Society are clearly distinguished from the programmes of other Estonian higher education institutions, and this gives them a strong position in the local market. A significant portion of the funds of the schools come from non-state sources (EU funds, tuition fees, private sector projects).
- 3) Tallinn University has a new modern campus and both teaching staff and students are very satisfied with the high-quality infrastructure. Tallinn University also has a modern library with broad access to digital databases and with separate rooms for individual and group work.
- 4) Teaching methods and tools are diverse, modern and innovative (interactive lectures, problem-based learning, independent work, etc.) and integrate both practical and theoretical components.
- 5) Good relationships exist between students and teaching staff. Students are effectively supported by professional counsellors and the study programme administrators. The counsellors

monitor student progress and, if necessary, intervene and assist them in the timely completion of their studies.

- 6) As many staff members are active professionally, most of the programmes also include practical components.
- 7) Teaching staff are competent and research-oriented. The number of publications per academic staff member is high.
- 8) Teaching staff members are involved in the work of professional networks and state authorities.
- 9) The entrance examinations make it possible to select motivated and capable candidates for student places. Students are enthusiastic about their study programmes and TU in general. The students also believe that the programmes prepare them well for their future studies and work.
- 10) According to the students, some courses (e.g. Introduction to EU Institutions), as well as the interactive and analytical teaching methods used (including video lectures), have provided them with a particularly positive learning experience at TU.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The content logic of the study programmes should be reviewed to eliminate unnecessary overlaps or repetitions between courses. It is unclear as to why the two BA programmes – Advertising and Publicity Studies and Public Relations – are separated. The distinction between two such narrow areas of study is artificial and does not serve the interests of students or the University from a strategic perspective. Since the contents of these programmes are already extensively overlapping, one might consider merging them into one comprehensive study programme, in which it would be possible to flexibly specialise into different fields of marketing communication.
- 2) New theoretical approaches are not systematically used in the Advertising and Publicity Studies programme. The process of updating courses should be more systematic.
- 3) Cooperation with other Estonian higher education institutions should be enhanced, in order to offer better learning opportunities to students and contribute to the development of business education in Estonia.
- 4) Since the financial resources are limited, their allocation should support achievement of the strategic objectives. The study programmes at the Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School should place more emphasis on international cooperation, and therefore more teaching and learning should be done in English.
- 5) The University should review the allocation of ECTS credits in the programme structure. In some study programmes there is a need to equalise student workloads: in courses with the same numbers of ECTS credits, student workloads should be comparable and in line with Tallinn University, national and European standards.
- 6) Students are not provided with sufficient written qualitative feedback on the results of examinations. At times the assessment methods are difficult for students to understand. For the sake of transparency and equal treatment of students, the assessment process should be clearly documented. It is advisable to establish uniform feedback rules for all assessments of students.
- 7) As the University also offers programmes taught in English, software should be introduced that makes it possible to detect plagiarism in other languages (in addition to Estonian) and to check the originality of student papers.
- 8) All learning materials for the study programmes taught in English should also be made available in English and be up to date.
- 9) The degree of internationalisation should be increased systematically, including allowing for a greater flexibility regarding the transfer of ECTS credits earned abroad, increasing the number of courses taught in English, encouraging international staff mobility and also offering student places to international students. In addition, it is advisable to develop performance indicators to

measure progress in this effort. According to the alumni, TU could launch more international programmes.

- 10) Student feedback is not sufficiently taken into account in the process of study programme development.
 - 11) When developing study programmes, more attention should be paid to the needs of the working students. The University could make greater use of new learning technologies to offer more flexible forms of study to students.
 - 12) Overly large study groups and unsuitable timetables for working students are concerns for the study programmes. The teaching and learning process should be made more flexible, for example, by using e-learning possibilities. All study programmes should systematically use diverse, flexible and digital methods in the process of teaching and learning. It would be useful for different schools and programmes to share and compare their experiences.
 - 13) The teaching staff should strongly encourage students to participate actively in discussions and provide them with more examples from real life. More attention should also be paid to developing students' managerial and critical thinking skills.
 - 14) The quality of their teaching, research, development and creative activities, including teaching skills development and international mobility, should all be taken into account when assessing the work of the teaching staff members.
 - 15) The University should systematically support research and allocate additional resources for this purpose. Both the University and the teaching staff members could be more active in applying for research funding from different sources.
 - 16) Although the MA programme in Communication Management is focused on intercultural communication, the international lecturers are only involved in teaching for short periods of time due to a lack of money. This is not in line with the main objective of the study programme. A solution could be to recruit more students into the programme, whose tuition fees generated would improve the financial situation.
 - 17) The teaching staff members would like to have more opportunities for pedagogical training which would also contribute to their adoption of new teaching techniques.
 - 18) There are too many students per lecturer in the Public and Business Management programme, which may become problematic in the long run. Due to a lack of money, it is not possible to involve a sufficient number of international lecturers in the teaching process. The heavy workloads of staff members also need more attention.
 - 19) Very few students are admitted to the Public Administration programme and the graduate numbers are low.
 - 20) Measures to reduce the dropout rates should be actively implemented. The reasons students drop out of the University should be identified and eliminated, if possible.
 - 21) On its website, the University should provide prospective and current students, alumni, and employers with as clear and up-to-date information on its programmes as possible in order to avoid discrepancies between stakeholder expectations and the realities.
 - 22) International student mobility is very low and should be encouraged in every possible way. Currently the existing mobility opportunities are not fully employed.
- 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 Tallinn University in seven years.

The decision was adopted by 9 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 Tallinn University no later than 11.07.2023.
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 11.04.2018.
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