



ESTONIAN QUALITY AGENCY  
FOR HIGHER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

# Report for Institutional Accreditation

## Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences

2021

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# Introduction

## Institutional accreditation

'**Institutional accreditation**' is the process of external evaluation which assesses the conformity of a University or higher education institution's management, work procedures, study and research activities and environment to both legislation and the goals and development plan of the higher education institution itself. This is feedback-based evaluation in which an international assessment panel analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the institution of higher education based on the self-assessment report of the institution and on information obtained during the assessment visit, providing recommendations for improvement and ways of implementing them.

**The goal of institutional accreditation** is to support the development of strategic management and quality culture that values learning-centeredness, creativity and innovation in the higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as to increase the societal impact of education, research and development delivered by the HEIs.

HEIs are assessed according to twelve standards of institutional accreditation. Assessment focuses on the core processes of the HEI – learning and teaching, research, development and creative activities, and service to society – as well as on strategic management of the organisation and resource management. The learning and teaching process is examined in more detail under five standards (study programme, teaching staff, learning and teaching, student assessment, and learning support processes). Throughout the assessment process, there is a focus on academic ethics, quality culture and internationalisation.

The Institutional Accreditation Report consists of two parts: (1) evaluation of twelve institutional accreditation standards, and (2) a report on quality assessment of a sample of study programmes.

Educational institutions must undergo institutional accreditation at least once every seven years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education [Guide to Institutional Accreditation](#).

The institutional accreditation of **the Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences** took place in March 2021. The Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) composed an international assessment committee, which was approved by the higher education institution. The composition of the panel was thereafter approved by the order of the EKKA director.

The following persons formed the expert panel:

<b>Annie Doona (Chair)</b>	Freelance Consultant in Quality, Diversity, Equality and Strategy (PhD), Emeritus President IADT, Institute of Art Design and Technology Dun Laoghaire (Ireland)
<b>Kristiina Tõnnisson (Secretary)</b>	Head of the Institute, Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu (Estonia)
<b>Agu Leinfeld</b>	Director of Software Development and Technology, As Datel (Estonia)

<b>Danute Rasimaviciene</b>	Lecturer, Consultant, Vilnius University Business School, former Dean of Business Management Faculty, Vilnius University of Applied Sciences (Lithuania)
<b>Garcia Ferrari Soledad</b>	Professor, Edinburgh College of Arts, University of Edinburgh (UK)
<b>Indra Tupp</b>	Student, Tallinn University (Estonia)
<b>Robert J. Coelen</b>	Professor of Internationalisation of Higher Education, Stenden University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands), Director Centre for Internationalisation of Education, University of Groningen (Netherlands)

### Assessment process

The assessment process was coordinated by EKKa staff – Ms Jekaterina Masenko and Ms Liia Lauri. The self-analysis report was prepared and the institutional accreditation visit carried out remotely during the Covid 19 international pandemic. This presented challenges both for EUAS and for the panel members. The Panel also took into account that some of the activities of EUAS, e.g. international recruitment during 2020, may have been affected by the pandemic.

After an initial preparation phase where the distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment panel was determined, the work of the assessment panel started on February 26, with an introduction to the assessment procedures by EKKa. Members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group during the site visit and to a detailed schedule for the site visit.

During the following four days, from the 1st to 4th of March, meetings were held with representatives of EAUS as well as external stakeholders.

On the 5th of March, the panel held an all-day meeting, during which the findings of the panel were discussed in detail and the structure of the final report was agreed. The findings of the team were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report and evaluation of the 12 accreditation standards.

In finalizing the assessment report, the committee took into consideration comments made by the institution. The committee submitted the final report to EKKa on 17 May 2021.

### Information about EUAS

EUAS was founded in 1992 as Mainor Business School (Mainori Majanduskool). EUAS became a private professional higher education institution in 1997. The owner of the HEI is AS Mainor. AS Mainor is a group of undertakings engaged in developing a smart city of the future, Ülemiste City.

The EUAS offers studies at the first and second cycle of higher education and continuing education in-service courses. It was positively accredited as an institution by the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKa) in 2014.

The mission of EUAS is to shape an entrepreneurial way of thinking and the vision is to be a recognised, reputable, and innovative education, research and development institution. Strategic goals established in the Development Plan 2018-2023 are:

- to provide the best realistic and practical higher education with an organisation of studies convenient for the student and with a well-thought methodology;

- to be an equal research and development partner for large undertakings in Estonia and Europe;
- to become a community of international talent;
- to be the centre of the mental dimension of Ülemiste City;
- to be an excellent workplace.

EUAS is managed by the management board consisting of one member, the Rector. The Rector is responsible for the strategic and operative management of EUAS as well as for the economic sustainability of the institution and the undertaking. To plan and manage the academic activities of EUAS, a supervisory board of EUAS has been formed.

EUAS is currently the largest private higher education institution in Estonia. The HEI has three study centres – in Tallinn, Tartu and Viljandi. In 2020, there were 1,636 students from 35 countries studying at the HEI. 52% of students pursue their studies in Estonian, 24% in Russian and 25% in English. In the study programme groups of business and administration, information technology, arts and personal services, instruction is provided at the level of professional higher education and in the study programme group of business and administration also at the level of master's studies. There are 1414 students studying on professional HE programmes and 222 on master level programmes. The number of students in EUAS has remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 1391 and 1636 in the past five years.

The EUAS employs 70 full-time employees. Academic staff include 15,1 (FTE) and 41,6 (FTE) administrative staff. 33% of the members of the academic staff have doctoral degrees. One of the characteristic features of EUAS is that part of the teaching is carried out by experienced specialists working on a contract basis. The gender balance across all EUAS's employees is 73,5% female and 26,5% male. The gender balance in academic positions is 67% female and 33% male. (SER)

### **Main impressions of the self-evaluation report and the visit**

The Self Evaluation Report (SER) provided was comprehensive. The panel was of the view however that the SER could have followed the standards and guidelines more closely in its layout and content. This would have made assessment of the material provided against the standards easier for the panel.

During the site visit the panel had the opportunity to engage with management, staff, current students, alumni and industry stakeholders. All the people that the panel met engaged positively with the process and were enthusiastic and clear in their responses. The panel requested two additional meetings on the 4th of March, one with the HR manager and one with the Study Programme Development Team. The panel requested the meeting with the HR manager to gain a better understanding of the HR Recruitment and staff development plan. The aim of the second meeting was to gain a better understanding of the Student Information System (SIS). A physical demonstration of the SIS was presented at this meeting and proved invaluable to the panel's appreciation of the system.

## Main changes on the basis of recommendations of the previous institutional accreditation

A previous institutional accreditation took place in 2014, the result of this was accreditation approved for EUAS for seven years. A number of recommendations from the 2014 panel had been addressed at the time of the 2021 accreditation visit. These included:

- The introduction of a better system of plagiarism detection, and training for staff. A plagiarism system URKUND is now used by staff.
- The introduction of a more effective system for student record keeping.
- Processes put in place for the encouragement and capture of day-to-day changes and improvements to modules and programmes including the appointment of a Study Programme Designer.

## Summary of the institutional accreditation findings

### Strengths

EUAS states its mission to be an entrepreneurial University of Applied Sciences with a focused relationship to industry. The panel found that EUAS does indeed have very strong links with industry - relations are based on trust, opportunities for cooperation are in place and there is good evidence of industry involvement and responsiveness to industry. The flexibility of the programmes is valued by students, including the flexible organisation of studies, flexibility of timetables and of content enabling students to combine studying working and caring responsibilities. EUAS offers a range of interesting study programmes responding to the needs of industry within a good learning environment. EUAS has a strong focus on industry and links to its surrounding environment, Ülemiste City, that offers both internship places and recruitment possibilities to the alumni of EUAS. Three languages of instruction are used at EAUS, Estonian, English, and Russian, this is more than similar institutions across the world and was considered very favourably by students and alumni. The staff at EUAS demonstrated strong links with practice across the institution's professional fields.

EAUS has applied good management to arrive at a situation of annual profit and the profit is reinvested in the institution. There is a commonly shared understanding of quality culture across EUAS. A good system of student feedback is in place with evidence of responsiveness in a timely manner, demonstrating an individual approach to students. A good system of internal and external evaluations is in place. The traffic light system for tracking students' progress is working well and helps the students manage their academic and financial responsibilities. A well-developed, consistent and comprehensive 'Ethics Code of Practice' is in place in the institution as well as training and development opportunities offered to students.

A student's study information system (SIS) is in place and is comprehensive. It meets the students' needs well. The overall learning experience at EUAS promotes life-long learning interests and aspirations.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

Particular areas of concern were identified during the visit and in the documentation provided in relation to research and development opportunities. EUAS needs to develop a more strategic approach to for research that includes identifying key areas of research, and the introduction of processes for the regulation of research practices.

There are too few research activities, not enough involvement of the staff in various research activities, and a low level of funds for applied research. EUAS would benefit from a more straightforward and more formal, and commonly shared, research plan and focus to enable more substantial impact on knowledge development and exchange across EUAS disciplines.

The EUAS has a good purpose for its internationalisation strategy, namely, to enhance the core functions of a HEI. This includes the development of its graduates as professionals who understand the international environment of their discipline. This could be enhanced by creating mobility windows in the programs to facilitate more graduates to undertake an international study experience. The university has a good range of international partners for this purpose. Presently, students take a specialised course on intercultural relations and communication. The effect of such a course is that elsewhere in the institution, staff consider this aspect to have been dealt with and it frees them from the need to consider the international aspects of their discipline in their courses. This trend can be reversed if staff are guided to develop learning outcomes that place their profession in an international context. This requires also more attention to internationalisation of staff development.

With regard to the provision of information presented on the programmes the panel found that this is inconsistent on the variety of platforms e.g.; the titles of study programmes in the internal documentation e.g. SER were different from the titles on EUAS web pages. Students also described the title of their study programme and what they believed would be on their parchment differently to the panel.

There are no clear KPI's at Strategic Management level that would clearly indicate the value and purpose of serving society. EUAS would benefit from the introduction of these.

With regard to teaching staff planning for widening skills of the teaching staff workforce is clearly one of the aims of EUAS, however, which disciplinary areas incoming staff should represent, what level of experience and background in terms of research or practice skills, has not been fully developed. A more comprehensive staffing plan will be needed to support all the expected goals across the range of areas of work in the institution. A number of training and mentoring schemes are available; however, these are not compulsory and a thorough analysis of the impact of training among the teaching staff workforce, does not seem to be available.

### Opportunities for further improvement

The panel identified a number of areas for further improvement. Alumni relations need to be more structured, based on more formal networks rather than based on personal connections. This will enable EUAS to benefit more from its alumni and to use them more fully in consultation around future development and the provision of industry-based opportunities for students.

Clarity is needed in the different management roles across the curriculum and study programmes, which would facilitate a better understanding of the responsibilities of staff and management e.g., in relation to day to day responsibilities of the study programme manager.

Whilst there was evidence of student involvement in committees across EUAS the panel felt that there needs to be a system of more formal and systematic involvement of students in consultation e.g. through the reintroduction of the Student Council, a body that is outlined in documentation but does not appear to be in existence currently.

### Commendations

The panel commend the flexibility of the programmes including flexibility of the timetables and content, this was highly valued by students.

The Students' study information system is comprehensive and meets students' needs.

The Traffic Light system for tracking students' progress is working well and helps the students manage their academic progress and their financial responsibilities.

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Strategic management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic ethics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internationalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning and teaching	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning support systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research, development and/or other creative activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service to society	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 1.1. Strategic management

**Standard:**

**Development planning at the higher education institution is purposeful and systematic, involving various stakeholders.**

**The higher education institution regularly evaluates the achievement of its stated objectives and the impact of its activities.**

**Guidelines:**

The HEI has formulated the objectives and key results for its core activities – learning and teaching; research, development and creative activities, and service to society – taking into account national priorities and the needs of society, focusing on its strengths and reducing unnecessary duplication both within the HEI and throughout higher education in Estonia.

The HEI is managed in accordance with its mission, vision and core values, as well as objectives set out on the basis of those principles. Responsibility for implementation of the goals and action plans of the development plan are clearly specified. Achievement of the objectives and effects of the activities are evaluated regularly. Creativity and innovation are supported and given value in both core and support activities.

Membership of the HEI (including students), as well as external stakeholders, is involved in developing and implementing the HEI's development plan and action plans. The HEI members share the core values that serve as a basis for the institution's development plan.

**Indicators:**

- The rate of achieving the objectives set in the development/action plan (key results)
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

### Evidence and analysis

Development planning responsibilities for the implementation of the development and action plans are clearly specified. EUAS has in place a well-articulated Strategic Plan with clearly outlined strategic goals and targets for future development. The attainment of the strategic goals is assessed based on a series of key performance indicators and action plans are drawn up and evaluated based on the expected results. However, the panel found that there are some areas of development that require further work, namely research and internationalisation. These are outlined below.

EUAS is a University of Applied Sciences with a strong and stated entrepreneurial vision, which informs all its activities. The panel found that this entrepreneurial approach was broadly understood, valued and recognised both within and outside the institution. This understanding and appreciation of the mission and vision was evidenced in meetings with management, staff, stakeholders, and alumni.

The institution has moved from a loss-making situation to a sustainable healthy financial position. Expenditure follows strategic development targets and room has been created for the development of the staff profile in terms of support staff as well as teaching staff. There are clear and ambitious targets for staff development. The protocols and procedures for staff to seek higher qualifications are well set out. Staff satisfaction, as well as student satisfaction increases over the last few years are a good sign that the institution has listened to and addressed concerns of the two principal stakeholders in the education process. EUAS has, via its SIS, an efficient student communication system and the use of three languages, although it places a significant burden on the organisation, is worthy of mention. Since the last institutional audit EUAS has made progress in reaching out to society, although there may still

be some gains in emphasising its national status with programmes, such as Robotics in collaboration with Cleveron AS.

The flexible approach to education to facilitate business-based learners is a strength of EUAS. Students commented that they were able to study, work and manage caring responsibilities as a result of this flexibility. During the panel visit the panel heard from students who were studying their programmes through the Russian language. This opportunity was regarded as a strength by the students and was given as the reason why some of the students had opted for their particular programme.

The panel were interested to learn how rigorously the admission procedures are applied in the light of EUAS being a private university of applied sciences and in order to demonstrate appropriate separation of academic and commercial interests. During the site visit e.g. in the meetings with management and staff, the panel was assured of the separation of academic and commercial processes both through the appropriate committees e.g. the Supervisory Board which appeared to be an important part of the University of Applied Sciences management structure, and through the admissions processes.

The panel noted that the issue of raising the national profile was referred to in one of the recommendations arising from the 2014 review. During the meeting with the alumni the panel heard that students in fact valued this association with Ülemiste and the associated technology-based companies as these were regarded as cutting edge in the Estonian technology industries. The alumni expressed the view that their programme had prepared them well to work across a range of technology-based industries. During the meeting with management the panel also found that EUAS has well developed links with a range of industries across Estonia.

EUAS has articulated its aspiration to become a full university, ideally the University of Ülemiste City. The panel supports the statement made by EAUS in the SER that the institution is not in position to achieve this at the present time.

However, one of the strategic goals of EAUS (2023) is to be an equal research and development partner for large undertakings in Estonia and Europe; the panel notes that the research profile means it is not in a position to achieve this at the present time.

During the site visit e.g. in the meetings with teaching staff and management, the panel found that although some staff were involved in research activities this appeared to be on the basis of their own interests rather than as a result of a clear strategy with a clear focus and set of planned research outcomes based on the strengths of EUAS. The panel also found in the meeting with external stakeholders that there did not appear to be a clear research relationship between the technology-based companies and EUAS. The panel is of the view that the companies and EUAS could more fully engage with and benefit from more formal research arrangements.

During the meetings with staff, students, alumni and stakeholders there was support for the aim to become a full university. However, all groups that the panel spoke to did express their strong support for EUAS maintaining its entrepreneurial vision and mission and its positive relationship with industry and applied focus should it become a full university. This unique relationship with industry was seen as a key feature of EUAS that should be preserved.

During the site visit the panel heard from staff and students that there had been good plans in place to address the online learning required by COVID-19 and that platforms such as Moodle were being used effectively. The flexible nature of EUAS programmes pre-COVID-19 meant that the transition appeared to be smooth. The panel also heard from teaching and from technical support staff about the online training and supports that had been made available.

The panel found that EUAS is managed in accordance with its vision and mission. National priorities, the needs of the labour market and society and the expectations of owners serve as the basis for planning the activities of EUAS and its strategic management.

The panel found that there is a robust management system in place in the documentation. The activities of EUAS are managed by three permanent steering bodies: the supervisory board of AS EUAS, the management board of AS EUAS and the supervisory board of EUAS. The supervisory board of AS EUAS meets regularly in accordance with the annual work plan approved and directs and supports the activities of the management board.

The management structure of EUAS was changed in 2018–2019. During 2015 to 2019 EUAS adopted a managerial management model. In 2020 they reverted to a more traditional model, with the management team now comprising The Rector, Vice Rector of Academic Affairs, Research Director and Head of Development and Partnership Relations. In their meeting with management the panel found that part of the reasons for a more traditional system was linked to the desire to become a full university where more traditional management structures might be the norm. The panel did find some confusion regarding a number of management roles including the role of the curriculum head and the study programme head. This confusion and lack of clarity on the roles was evidenced in the panel's meetings with management, teaching staff and students. EUAS would benefit from more clarity in relation to the different management roles across the curriculum and study programmes.

In their meetings with staff and management the panel discovered that a number of staff in key management team roles were all newly appointed within the last two years. The newly appointed staff appeared well qualified, professional and enthusiastic but the panel is of the view that so many new staff in key management roles may present challenges for EUAS in the short term.

The self-evaluation report (SER) was prepared by the EUAS accreditation working group, which was formed in 2020. Sub-groups responsible for particular sections of the SER were led by members of the management team including The Rector, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, the Head of Business Development and Partnership Arrangements and the appointed Study Designer.

The SER p. 22 states that nearly three quarters of the ordinary staff of EUAS participated in the work groups and they all made a strong contribution to the preparation of the analysis. In their meetings with teaching staff the panel found that they were aware of the SER and had access to a copy of it, they did seem to have been offered the opportunity to contribute but none of the teaching staff that the panel met indicated that they had been part of the actual SER working group.

Development planning responsibilities for the implementation of the development and action plans are clearly specified. EUAS has in place a well-articulated Strategic Plan with clearly outlined strategic goals and targets for future development. The attainment of the strategic goals is assessed based on a series of key performance indicators and action plans are drawn up and evaluated based on the expected results. The panel discussed the strategic aim of serving society and while the panel found some good understanding from both staff and students of what this might entail, the panel did find in its discussions with management that there did not appear to be KPIs that specifically related to Serving Society.

A working groups system is in place across EUAS in order to implement and monitor the progress on development and action plans. In addition to designated structural units there are permanent committees and work groups that are engaged in specific topics and processes, including Study Programme Councils, The APEL Committee, The Ethics Committee, The Appeal Committee, and others.

In addition to permanent work groups, there are temporary work groups that are usually formed for implementing improvement actions, development of new solutions and/or giving an expert assessment (e.g. written papers work group and attestation process work group). The panel also heard from management of plans to broaden the composition of the development group to include more Estonian based companies.

During the site visit the panel found that the Student Council had not been meeting and was of the view that the reintroduction of that body would help support the work of the development group.

The panel felt that more systemic involvement of the stakeholders (students, alumni, visiting teaching staff etc.) in the creation of the development plan would ensure a stronger and more diverse development plan and the support of the stakeholders in its implementation.

EUAS has a clearly articulated set of core values in place (SER, Strategic Plan, EEK website). There appears to be a shared set of core values across the institution. There are, however, some difficulties which EUAS acknowledged in their SER in this area. The first of these relating to students, concerns the part time nature of programmes and students, plus their age profile and mode of attendance. This may present particular difficulties in involving part time students in the broader aspects of EUAS development and plans.

In relation to staff, many visiting staff involved in the delivery of professional higher education have a primary job outside of EUAS - they are working practitioners. The benefits of this for students are clear but it does mean that the involvement of these staff in activities and events at EUAS is more difficult. These staff informed the panel of a range of communication strategies including a newsletter and emails that were in place and did not appear to have an issue with communication with EUAS.

EUAS has a good system of regular reviews in place. Annual sectoral action plans with indicators are in place. Staff seminars are held twice yearly related to strategic goals and progress. The leadership and owners of EUAS have a clear vision and purpose with respect to designing and creating study programmes supported by the Study Designer in place, as a result of the last formal review. Study programme reviews take place and action plans are drawn up.

EUAS does not appear to have a formal external benchmarking system in place particularly in relation to international partners and identification of best practice. EUAS has articulated its desire to be more international, particularly in terms of staff mobility, but it's not clear why and how partnership universities are chosen. A system of formal benchmarking, including choosing universities that can add value to EUAS and facilitate the sharing of best practice and knowledge would benefit EUAS. The issue of internationalisation is discussed more fully in Section 1.5.

The SER p.19 identifies a number of areas of development connected to internationalisation, these include recording teaching staff mobility (Annex 4; SER, p. 56-57), student international mobility (SER, p. 59; although this is not listed in terms of actual student numbers), proportion of foreign students (SER, p. 53, 54, and the percentage of students studying in foreign languages (English and Russian) as a medium of instruction (SER, p. 15). Whilst the panel concludes that some of these objectives are being met there were issues regarding for example the internationalisation of staff beyond just international travel, and limited opportunities for student mobility. More development at strategic level is needed to support staff in internationalising the curriculum for which they are responsible.

The internationalisation of research can be defined as enhanced international collaborations resulting in peer-reviewed joint publications (as a measurable objective). In this context it is very useful, as EUAS does, to measure international staff mobility (both inward and outward), but joint publications with

international colleagues could usefully be another measure of international high-level research collaboration at a strategic level. The issue of internationalisation is discussed more fully in Section 1.5.

## Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) “conforms to requirements”.

EUAS occupies a unique position within Estonian higher education and has articulated a clear vision and mission that is understood and valued by staff students and stakeholders. There are good development plans in place that respond to national priorities and the needs of the labour market and industry. A system of development working groups and committees is in place.

Research and internationalisation, both defined as key strategic areas by EUAS do not have clear plans for development or a clear focus. Serving society does not appear to have clear aims and goals.

## Strengths

- There are strong links with industry - relations are based on trust, opportunities for cooperation are in place and there is good evidence of industry involvement and responsiveness to industry.
- The flexibility of the programmes is valued by students, including the flexible organisation of studies, flexibility of timetables and of content.
- EUAS offers a range of Interesting study programmes responding to the needs of industry within a good learning environment.

## Areas of concern and recommendations

- Research needs to have a clearer focus, purpose and plan to enable EUAS to have a strong impact in knowledge development and exchange across EUAS disciplines.
- There are no clear KPI's at Strategic Management level that would clearly indicate the value and purpose of serving society. EUAS would benefit from the introduction of these.
- A clearer purpose and strategy for the strategic development of internationalisation is needed.

## Opportunities for further improvement

- EUAS needs to devise a system of more formal and systematic involvement of students in decision making e.g. through the reintroduction of the Student Council.
- Clarity is needed in the different management roles across the curriculum and study programmes, which would facilitate a better understanding of the responsibilities of staff and management e.g. in relation to day to day responsibilities of the study programme manager
- Development planning in relation to full university aspiration and a clear plan for growth of research required to achieve this does not appear to be in place.

## 1.2. Resources

**Standard:**

The higher education institution develops its staff and manages its physical and financial resources in a purposeful, systematic and sustainable manner.

Internal and external communications of the higher education institution (including marketing and image-building) are targeted and managed.

**Guidelines:**

The HEI has an efficient staff development system in terms of both academic and support staff. The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development are based on the objectives of the HEI's development plan and are fair and transparent. The principles for employees' remuneration and motivation are defined, available to all employees, and followed.

Allocation of the HEI's financial resources is based on the objectives of its development plan. The management and development of its infrastructure (buildings, laboratories, classrooms, IT systems, etc.) are economically feasible. Sufficient resources are available for updating the infrastructure for education and research, and/or a strategy exists enabling the HEI to acquire them.

The HEI has a functioning system for internal and external communications, relevant to the target audiences. The information made public about HEI's activities (including study programmes) and the findings of external evaluations is correct, up to date, easily accessible and understandable. The HEI has a system to popularise its core activities and academic career opportunities. The HEI members are informed of the decisions relevant to them in a timely manner.

Employee satisfaction with management, working conditions, information flow, etc., at the HEI is surveyed regularly and the survey results are used in quality improvement activities.

**Indicators:**

- Distribution of revenues and costs
- The results of the staff satisfaction survey
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

### Evidence and analysis

The institution has shown a remarkable performance over the last half-decade, where each year, apart from 2015, has shown a significant increase in total revenue. In 2015 the total revenue was €49K per FTE staff increasing to €76K (SER, p. 30). This is a substantial performance increase. It has been ascribed to successful admission and enhanced, more individualised, student guidance systems and a closer nexus with industry, more research, enhanced work effectiveness and professionalism, and EU funding (SER, p.31). The organisation has moved from a loss-making position to showing a stable profitable situation. Clearly, financial resources are managed in a sustainable manner. The various financial indicators from the balance sheet that was provided (covering years 2017-2019) all showed overall improvement, further supporting the responsible financial management of the institution. The financial position will be further strengthened when EUAS has achieved its targeted enrolment. This is a realistic target (Annex 3) and the planned development will create further international/cultural diversity (Annex 3). EUAS is aware that this may involve expansion of services to international students. Thus, the panel is confident that the planned increases will be appropriately supported. In general, the allocation of resources follows the objectives of the organisation. Planned actions (SER, p. 31, 32) are budgeted to allow strategic development.

The remuneration system has similar dimensions to other institutions; in terms of the academic staff, salaries are higher than generally applied in Estonia, giving the institution an opportunity to recruit the best available persons, although this is also dependent on other conditions of work. An interesting and certainly helpful requirement for new staff is their educational technology competence. This demonstrates that the institution ensures that staff are able to avail themselves of educational resources that are cutting-edge as far as technology is concerned. Staff development also has clear objectives and they could be called ambitious (SER, p.18). A budget of about 4% of the salaries is invested in staff training (SER, p. 33). There is both attention to skills necessary for good teaching as well as the qualification of staff in terms of academic degrees. Apart from a teaching mentor programme EUAS also has clear goals for international staff mobility, both inward and outward. Staff satisfaction shows a generally upward trend over the last few years. This result is also indicative that staff concerns are heard and addressed. This creates a sustainable staff recruitment and development situation in which existing staff will start to act as ambassadors for their place of work.

The development of staff skills in terms of internationalisation, other than what they might learn from some international mobility, lacks clear effort. This may in part be due to the absence of a clearly articulated purpose of internationalisation activities (see Section 1.5).

EUAS has a student hostel; this is an important advantage for the recruitment of international students. Inviting international students to study at EUAS cannot be optimally successful if the international students are not guaranteed a place to stay. Apart from the buildings, two types of resources are extremely important in today's higher education environment. One is the institutional library, particularly its digital holdings and access thereto. Connected to this is the infrastructure for IT and software systems. It appears that the SIS is developed in house and that continued investment in this system is expected by the parent company. This is outlined in the action plan for 2020-21. A GDPR compliance audit is planned for the same period. Other software systems, such as DMS and EUAS Meet also support the institution in its digital activities. It appears that the physical infrastructure (including IT hardware) is sufficient and receives appropriate maintenance, investment, and upgrading. During the panel visit it became clear from meetings with students, alumni and administrative staff that the student IT support systems are excellent and that the back-end of the SIS will be updated in the near future. The digital library facilities appear to be appropriate for the needs of students and staff.

Internal communication uses 3 languages, which is a significant burden on the organisation. Nevertheless, there is a well organised system for ensuring appropriate documents are translated by professional translation services. The translations are evaluated by both the originator of the document as well as a commissioner for translation. A mechanism for redress, when translations are not found to be of sufficient quality, has been determined (Annex 12). The responsibility for other forms of internal communication in a foreign language rests with the employee concerned. EUAS, as a multilingual institution has set up a good system for ensuring relevant communications can reach the receivers in their own language. Staff satisfaction with internal communication across all aspects has improved over the last few years.

In terms of external marketing channels, EUAS uses many of the available channels both physical and digital. The indicators for all these channels show increased patronage. This shows at least in terms of statistics that these channels are working well. Given the increased enrolment, it indicates that EUAS directly benefits from its external marketing activities through these channels. The expenditure on marketing is in line with the results of new admissions and seems appropriate for the size of the institution. The stated student recruitment targets are likely to be met.

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) “conforms to requirements”. The allocation of resources, as well as the reinvestment of profit of the holding company in research, follows the planned development of the institution. There are opportunities for staff development and adequate remuneration follows performance against set targets. The internal communication presents a challenging three-language environment which is handled well by EUAS. Evidence for external communication (in the form of increased enrolments) shows that the marketing communication works well. The national profile of the institution could be strengthened by selecting key performance areas of relevance to society and communicating about this.

## Strengths

- EAUS has applied good management to arrive at a situation of annual profit and the profit is reinvested in the institution.

## Opportunities for further improvement

- It would be advantageous for EUAS to find additional institutional users for its SIS. Should this happen, the burden of continued development can be shared and the inputs for further development will help to ensure the system remains robust for a wider range of situations.
- EUAS could gain a stronger national profile by linking its research efforts more strongly to the education programmes as an effort to provide graduates with the wherewithal to be able to effectively participate in society and work that is in the grip of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Indeed, its Robotics programme is addressing a cardinal development in the 4IR and the institution could make the general public more aware of its position.

## 1.3. Quality Culture

### **Standard:**

**The higher education institution has defined the quality of its core and support processes, and the principles of quality assurance.**

**In the higher education institution, internal evaluation supports strategic management and is conducted regularly at different levels (institution, units, study programmes).**

**The findings of internal and external evaluations are analysed and quality improvement activities implemented.**

### **Guidelines:**

Members of the HEI have agreed upon definitions for the quality of their core and support processes and are guided by them in their daily work. The HEI has established its policies and procedures for internal quality assurance (internal evaluation). The regular internal quality assurance both at the institutional and study programme level takes into account, inter alia, the standards set out in these Guidelines. All members of the HEI, including students and external stakeholders, participate in internal evaluations.

Internal evaluation of study programmes results in feedback from experts within the HEI and/or from outside it. Regular reviews and enhancements of study programmes ensure their relevance, including their compliance with international trends. In the course of internal evaluations, peer learning, comparisons with other HEIs regarding their results and means for achievement, as well as a sharing of best practices take place, among other things.

Internal evaluation is based on the following key questions in quality management: What do you want to achieve, and why? How do you want to do it? How do you know that the activities are effective and will have the desired impact? How do you manage the quality improvement activities?

**Indicators:**

- Improvement activities implemented based on the analyses of internal evaluations in the HEI's core and support processes (examples from different areas)
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

## Evidence and analysis

EUAS defines the quality of education as “The ability of the education institution to meet the needs of the student employers and society and other stakeholders that are defined in the development plan” (SER, p.43). EUAS has a documented system of quality assurance procedures and a quality management system. This internal and external assessment system of EUAS is described in the document ‘EUAS Mainor’s quality management system’ (Annex 19). The panel found in meetings with staff and management that EUAS has a good understanding of what constitutes a quality culture and has well defined quality processes in place.

The overall institutional responsibility for quality lies with the Rector but a number of specific areas of responsibility lie with other Executive members e.g. the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, who has responsibility for the student experience from admission to graduation. EUAS has a Quality Adviser in place. During the site visit, in particular the meetings with management and teaching staff, the panel found that day to day QA responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning lies with the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs.

EUAS says it has a culture of constant improvement – bringing about changes and creating chances for improvement using organisational learning. EUAS has stated its strategic goal of obtaining the EQUIS international quality certificate in order to help it develop and benchmark its quality systems and practices (SER, p 11). This was discussed with management and teaching staff and those responsible for research and development. While it was clear that there were a number of international partnerships in place it is less clear as to why they were chosen and whether any best practice exchanges of ideas, knowledge or processes took place. The panel is of the view that more formal arrangements around benchmarking and sharing best practice would benefit EUAS.

The panel found that EUAS carries out regular internal assessments which support strategic management, and regularly participates in various external assessments. EUAS has a number of internal elements in place to ensure that there is a quality of culture in place, that this is understood, and that quality is monitored and evaluated.

EUAS has participated in a number of external evaluations with a total of eight external evaluations carried out between 2015 to 2020. The most recent whole-of-institution accreditation was in 2014 where a number of recommendations were set out in the evaluation report. The panel identified examples of where the recommendations were addressed, these included the following;

- The appointment of a study designer in place since 2018 supporting staff to develop learning outcomes and developing syllabi.
- Organized pedagogical training sessions.

- Policies and procedures around plagiarism in place. A plagiarism system URKUND is now used by staff.
- An external marketing partner is now in place with the intention of raising the profile of EUAS.

There appeared to be a good response to previous evaluations and action plans had been put in place to address the recommendations.

EUAS also established the statutes of the study programmes, which give a detailed overview of the activities related to the creation, development, management and closure of the study programme and of the organisation of Study Programme Councils.

There is also a strong system of quality monitoring of its core processes and study programmes. In order to promote a quality of culture as well as participation in mandatory evaluations EUAS has also participated in a series of voluntary quality improvement projects e.g. Committed to Excellence (C2E), and the Estonian Management Quality Award Competition (SER, p.47)

The attainment of the target level of the indicators is assessed once a year. EUAS believes that their system of regular measurement of the indicators gives feedback on the implementation of the development plan. Annual action plans focus on the goals that are not being achieved, and the reasons for this are sought and remedies put in place.

The panel wanted to explore with management how the quality of teaching is ensured in cases where one module is taught by several lecturers. The Panel was informed of a series of staff performance reviews that are in place, staff feedback on a whole module is also sought which asks for feedback on teachers' performance.

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel concludes that EUAS (in the context of the particular standard) "conforms to requirements". EUAS has a good system of quality assurance and improvement in place with management and staff demonstrating a clear understanding of what a quality culture means. Regular reviews and engagement take place. EUAS has participated in a series of internal and external quality reviews. Feedback from staff stakeholders and students is sought and acted upon and changes are made as a result. The quality of student work and their progress in EUAS is monitored through an effective record system where concerns on student progress or welfare are identified and responded to quickly. Whilst EUAS has international partners in place there could be a more formal and better system for choosing partners rather than the informal system that is in place at present.

## Strengths

- There is commonly shared understanding of quality culture across the institution.
- A good system of student feedback is in place with evidence of responsiveness in a timely manner, an individual approach to students.
- A good system of internal and external evaluations is in place which inform management and ensure that strategic goals are monitored and met.
- The traffic light system for tracking students' progress is working well and helps the students manage their academic and financial responsibilities.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- EUAS would benefit from the development of a formal system of benchmarking internationally with identified best practice institutions (see also Section 1.5).

## 1.4. Academic ethics

### **Standard:**

The higher education institution has defined its principles for academic ethics, has a system for disseminating them among its members, and has a code of conduct including guidelines for any cases of non-compliance with these principles.

The higher education institution has a functioning system for handling complaints.

### **Guidelines:**

The HEI values its members and ensures that all its employees and students are treated according to the principle of equal treatment.

Employees and students of the HEI are guided by the agreed principles of academic ethics in all their activities.

The HEI respects fundamental values and policies of research set out in the document, 'Research Integrity', issued jointly by Estonian research institutions, the Estonian Academy of Sciences, the Estonian Research Council and the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.

The HEI supports its students and teaching staff in their understanding and responding to ethical issues. Teaching staff and students do not tolerate academic fraud, including cheating and plagiarism, and they will act immediately upon any such occurrence.

Management of complaints from HEI members (including discrimination cases) is transparent and objective, ensuring fair treatment of all parties.

### **Indicators:**

- The percentage of student papers checked by plagiarism detection systems and the percentage of detected plagiarisms
- Other indicators depending on the HEI, for example statistics about complaints (total number, the proportion of decisions taken in favour of the applicant)

### Evidence and analysis

The panel found that EUAS highly values links between academic work and industry through research and development. With regard to these values EUAS has developed a substantial 'Ethics code of practice' to ensure openness, inclusion and good conduct within the institution, as well as to guide collaboration with external partners. In addition, EUAS has set out clear guidance in relation to academic fraud, which outlines the principles for tackling plagiarism and confidentiality (meeting with external stakeholders). 'Research integrity' is also considered within the code of practice, drawing on institutional and national guidance. In the context of the institution's strong connection and collaboration with industry, it was confirmed to the panel during the visit by staff and management that EUAS carries out ethics and integrity checks as partnerships are developed. These are managed with a

series of suitable forms which indicate overall goals, with checks including website searches, confirmation of due diligence with Embassies, etc.

During the meetings with students, the panel found that students are asked to complete declarations of work when they write their final thesis. However, the information provided does not clarify the regularity of the diversity of ethics checks that have been set up within the institution, particularly in relation to research within academic staff and students. Similarly, the Ethics Committee appears to meet once a year to assess specific cases or by request from the Chair, if required during the academic session. Therefore, the Ethics Committee's key role is in the resolution of conflicts and appears to be less involved in strategic development or in academic assessment of ethical procedures across all activities, including research, development and knowledge transfer. Whereas the processes are clearly in place, further reflection may be given to the different stages of engagement with these across the institution.

The institution provides guidance to staff and students in relation to academic ethics over a range of seminars and training events, which demonstrate a useful means to engage with colleagues across EUAS. The panel learnt from staff during the visit that teachers are made aware of the Code of Ethics at the time of their contract of employment when this code becomes part of the working agreement. The Code is clearly available to staff and students. For instance, during the visit the panel identified 'pop-up' windows that appear on the student portal as students sign in, which are helpful to guide students to the institution's 'Code of Ethics'. However, at the meeting with the Academic Affairs and the Study Support Team, it was pointed out to the panel that the Code of Ethics has been recently reviewed, after becoming a 'hot topic' in recent months, indicating that embedding this Code in practice within the institution is at an early stage.

Plagiarism has been a more challenging issue for EUAS over the past few academic sessions, with the SER report describing a number of procedures that were put in place to ensure that the required standards were achieved (SER, p. 24 and p.50). The process of assessment and appeal, if necessary, of a case of plagiarism appears to be robust, and entails significant commitment from academic staff over training and monitoring (SER pp 50-51).

The panel found that the percentages of papers that are checked for plagiarism is comprehensive and does provide an opportunity to identify cases of academic misconduct. The documentation does not clearly explain how changes in practices are implemented once plagiarism is detected.

The information provided by the institution in relation to plagiarism shows that regular checks are carried out and cases of plagiarism are identified and considered for further action. These systems appear to have been strengthened recently with data showing results for 2019 and 2020. Therefore, it would be useful to monitor processes in place and results as well as to ensure the achievements continue on a long-term basis.

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) "conforms to requirements". The institution has clearly defined principles for academic ethics, contained within the Ethics Code of Practice). These principles are disseminated through a number of channels, including online resources, seminars and in class, as teaching staff raise ethical issues in the context of the 'Research study module', as pointed out during the meeting with

research teams and representatives of the ethics committee. In conclusion, whereas the panel has identified potential areas of improvement in relation with processes of implementation of the current policies and regularity of ethics checks, the panel found that EUAS conforms to requirements in this standard.

### Strengths

- A well-developed, consistent and comprehensive Ethics Code of Practice is in place in the institution as well as the training and development opportunities offered to students.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- The range of regular ethics checks that are carried out across coursework, research and development, by staff and students, is unclear. These activities should be more carefully formalised within the work of the institution.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- Overall, the panel suggests that further development in relation to defining processes for ethics checks and associated responsibilities, together with guidance for students and staff, including visiting lecturers, would be beneficial.

## 1.5. Internationalisation

#### **Standard:**

**The higher education institution has set objectives for internationalisation and assesses the attainment of these objectives regularly.**

**The higher education institution has created an environment that encourages international mobility of students and teaching staff, supporting the development of learning, teaching and RDC activities, as well as the cultural openness of its members and Estonian society in general.**

#### **Guidelines:**

The HEI creates opportunities for international student exchanges by offering study programmes and/or modules taught in English. The learning environment at the HEI supports internationalisation and cultural openness.

Recognition of qualifications and recognition of prior learning and work experiences for student admission and programme completion are in accordance with the quality requirements set by the HEI, are systemic and consistent with the expected learning outcomes and support international student mobility. The organisation of studies at the HEI facilitates student participation in international mobility (e.g., study programmes enable mobility windows). The HEI has agreements with foreign higher education institutions and, through international exchange, sends its students abroad to study and undertake internship, providing comprehensive support for this. Members of the teaching staff encourage students to participate in international mobility.

International lecturers participate in the process of teaching, including supervision of doctoral theses. The HEI supports and recognises the participation of its teaching staff in international teaching, research or creative projects, as well as their teaching, research or creative work and personal development which are performed at HEIs abroad.

**Indicators:**

- Teaching staff mobility (in-out)
- Student mobility (in-out)
- Other indicators depending on the HEI, for example:
  - Number of English-taught study programmes by main units and levels of study
  - Percentage of foreign students (by study programmes, levels of study, in total in the HEI)
  - Percentage of study programmes that include English-taught subjects (of at least 15 ECTS)
  - Number of ECTS acquired through external mobility

## Evidence and analysis

EUAS has set objectives for internationalisation with activities occurring throughout the institution. (SER, Annex 3). These activities include what would be classified as international mobility opportunities for students and staff, both inward and outward mobility. They also include activities that could be grouped under the rubric internationalisation at home. The activities impact upon all three functions of a HEI, including education, research, and its service to society.

EUAS is aware that internationalisation is not a goal unto itself but serves to enhance other performance aspects of the institution. However, during the visit, the panel became aware that this knowledge mainly exists on paper and is not widely understood throughout the organisation. Staff and students seem to be focussed on the visible international manifestations but are not really aware of the notion that internationalisation activities are conducted to enhance the three functions of EUAS. EUAS measures the progress made with internationalisation activities by monitoring the KPI's outlined in the guidelines. Thus, for example, teaching staff mobility is recorded and carefully detailed in terms of travel plan and outcomes (Annex 4; SER, p. 56-57), student international mobility (SER, p. 59; although not listed in terms of actual student numbers), proportion of foreign students (SER, p. 53, 54, and the percentage of students studying in foreign languages (English and Russian) as a medium of instruction (SER, p. 15).

It was clear from meetings with management and staff, that the institution encourages staff to publish internationally in peer-reviewed journals. This is also evident from the financial reward system for achieving this. The internationalisation of research (i.e. cooperation with individuals from other countries to publish or to conduct research that is of international relevance) is in a way a self-fulfilling spiral. The objective for internationalisation of research could therefore be defined as enhanced international collaborations resulting in peer-reviewed joint publications (as a measurable objective). In this context it is very useful, as EUAS does, to measure international staff mobility (both inward and outward), but joint publications with international colleagues could usefully be another measure of international high-level research collaboration.

There are extensive activities, together with the availability of programmes in different languages, to attract international students. There have been substantial numbers of international students joining the programmes from a diverse range of countries. (SER, Table 21). EUAS enlists the support of appropriately vetted recruitment agencies and participates in student recruitment fairs in a manageable range of countries. Clear rules and processes make it transparent how international students can gain admission. EUAS uses appropriate mechanisms, including the Estonian ERIC/NARIC suggested procedures, use of international language proficiency tests, an admission interview, and common guidelines for admission from certain countries (Annex 26) to verify candidates' prior

educational qualifications. There is a good support system for arriving international students. During their induction students are made aware of the opportunities to remain in the country after graduation. EUAS conducts activities in which local and international students are mixed to perform tasks together.

EUAS has mobility agreements for outbound international mobility for students with a good range of international partners (mainly in Europe). There is an acceptable level of student international outward mobility, although the panel could not discover specific international mobility windows in programmes. Indeed, during the panel visit it was mentioned by students that for the Robotics programme there was no opportunity for international mobility. Given the potential benefits that accrue from international mobility, this would be an opportunity worthwhile realising.

International staff mobility is conducted for several purposes related to teaching and research, to broaden the horizon of staff and the purview of their discipline in international contexts. These staff mobility activities support staff to strive for a higher level of excellence and to ensure they are aware of international levels of such excellence. The receipt of EQUIS certification, targeted for 2023 (SER, p. 47), should testify to this. Staff international mobility is carefully planned and intended outcomes are determined prior to the travel. This is good practice. Participation in international conferences is encouraged by EUAS. However, the number of staff that undertake internationalisation activities should be increased. This should not just include international travel, but specific training for internationalisation of the curriculum.

One of the potential pitfalls of having a specific course on intercultural relations and communication is that it tends to induce other courses to pay less or no attention to opportunities that arise in the intercultural and international domains. This is due to the argument that this issue has been dealt with elsewhere. However, it is important for students to learn to embrace cultural diversity, along with diversity more generally, particularly in the context of their domain. We have noted during the panel visit that students in Robotics, for example, are critical students who examine the value of parts of their courses against their future field of work. This leads to excellent possibilities, even in the more technical domains, to have them experience the benefits of cognitive diversity in group processes, whatever the source of that diversity.

It should be possible for each programme to define what intercultural competence and international awareness means in the context of the workplace of graduates and to express this as learning outcomes. This then becomes the basis for conducting internationalisation activities with a specific purpose (to achieve the learning outcomes). These activities can then be integrated into the regular programme. We note that this action is taken up in the current internationalisation action plan (SER, Annex 25).

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) “conforms to requirements”. EUAS has a welcoming and caring environment for international students and guest lecturers. There are international mobility programs for staff and students and the performance of these activities are measured. The institution is clear about the objectives of internationalisation, namely to enhance the learning, teaching, and research activities. It would do well to create specific international mobility windows in all of its programs.

## Strengths

- Three languages of instruction are used at EAUS, this is more than similar institutions across the world. This gives a greater proportion of potential foreign students access to their education and thus enhances the opportunity for EUAS to attract foreign students.

#### Areas of concern and recommendations

- The EUAS should create short international mobility windows in their programs to facilitate students to undertake international study periods that fit within their options as a result of local commitments. This will benefit their development as professionals with an international outlook;
- The EUAS should pay more attention to internationalisation of staff beyond just international travel. They need to be guided how to internationalise the curriculum for which they are responsible.

#### Opportunities for further improvement

- The panel suggests that staff training around the internationalisation of the curriculum, which requires a discipline specific approach should be considered. The meaning of internationalisation is dependent on the context, this includes a varied approach depending on the discipline. The integration of intercultural competence and international perspectives on a discipline are better taught in an integrated way (see also p. 29).
- The panel suggests that work on the curriculum could take place to be able to include a student international mobility window to enhance opportunities for students to acquire or enhance important transversal skills.

## 1.6. Teaching staff

### **Standard:**

**Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of learners and value their own continuous self-development.**

### **Guidelines:**

Distribution of teaching staff by age and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff ensure the sustainability of studies. The career model of academic staff motivates capable young people to start an academic career and creates opportunities for their advancement.

The HEI supports systematically the development of its teaching staff. Members of the teaching staff engage in development of their professional and teaching skills, improve their supervision competence, and share best practices with one another.

Teaching staff's participation in research, development and/or creative activities supports the teaching process and ensures competence for the supervision of students' theses (including doctoral theses).

Members of the teaching staff collaborate in fields of teaching, research and/or creative work within the HEI and with partners outside the HEI, e.g. with field practitioners, public sector organisations, companies, other research and development institutions, and lecturers from other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions. Qualified visiting lecturers and practitioners participate in the teaching process.

When assessing the work of teaching staff (including their periodical evaluations), the effectiveness of their teaching as well as their research, development and creative work is taken into account, including student feedback, the effectiveness of their student supervision, development of their

teaching and supervisory skills, their international mobility, and their entrepreneurial experience or other work experience in their fields of speciality outside the HEI.

**Indicators:**

- Competition for elected academic positions
- Number of students per teaching staff member in full-time equivalent (FTE)
- Percentage of teaching staff holding a PhD degree
- The results of the students' feedback about the teaching staff
- Teaching staff participating in continuing training or other forms of teaching skills development
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

## Evidence and analysis

The panel found that EUAS has a strong and well-developed human resources policy and guidance which clearly sets out expectations for workloads and commitments across teaching staff. The Human Resources Policy (Appendix 4) establishes duties and responsibilities for academic and non-academic staff, promotion and progression procedures and remuneration, as well as the required qualifications for the range of academic activity offered by the institution. During the visit, the panel identified an engaged and supportive teaching staff workforce, open to discussion of concerns from students and fellow staff members. However, among the staff community there was little understanding of the impact, wider access, and staff satisfaction in relation with the support systems available within the institution. For example, it would be useful to understand the general approach to different career levels (early career academics, senior staff, etc.). In addition, the panel did not hear evidence of a wider knowledge of opportunities for internationalisation or for research development (meeting with teaching staff).

There is a healthy range of age and levels of experience among the teaching staff in EUAS, which showcases a vibrant and engaging environment, as well as a wealth of academic experience. However, the panel found that it could be beneficial if the ratio of academic staff with PhD-level education was higher, with qualifications generally showcasing an academic staff community with stronger links in practice-related work than in academic-related experience. It was explained by the EUAS leadership team that plans for the future include broader skillsets in teaching staff, to achieve a teaching community who are 'better researchers and better able to understand society'. However, it was less clear to the panel what the means to achieve this are, the areas in which this development will be sought, and the mechanisms that will be put in place to upskill the existing workforce. It was also identified by the panel that the teaching staff interviewed (mostly visiting lecturers) had not been widely involved in staff or skills development planning.

Staff development takes place through formal procedures, such as 'development interviews' that take place on a regular basis every year, 'evaluations' that are organised every three years, and regular meetings between staff at different seniority levels (SER, p. 64). However, more clarity is needed in relation to numbers of staff members who take part in these processes every year, as well as in the results of these meetings and procedures in relation to improving skills and training opportunities. There are also more informal structures for staff to receive advice or feedback, through a number of tools available in the institution, such as a mentoring scheme in place since 2014. However, it is not

compulsory for staff to participate in this, and there is little information on the impact of this scheme in terms of improving skills or encouraging staff to develop research.

In order to improve the quality of teaching, pedagogical training is in place for teaching staff with organised teaching methodology events. Examples of these over the past years include distance learning and the student experience. The panel was interested in ascertaining the views of the staff on the usefulness of this training. The staff that the panel met knew that the training was available and those who had availed of it spoke positively of their experience. Staff valued the training and support that had been given to support them during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Regarding training however, neither the SER nor the meetings revealed how staff participation in training and development is monitored and assessed, e.g. how many members of staff access the different training options and what are the benefits of these. In addition, the training portfolio provided is based on a broader internal delivery or on links with other national institutions, which have their own interests and expectations (SER, p. 33). Further engagement with international training opportunities would be beneficial for staff development, which would require forward planning in relation with time availability and a range of required skills, such as language (see also 'opportunities for development under the standard 'Internationalisation'. Internationalisation experiences are undertaken by a very small number of the teaching staff community, which may prevent the acquisition of intercultural skills.

The SER is vague in relation to the support offered to staff in entrepreneurship and innovation, which are the key overarching institutional aims, or how staff are supported in their teaching and research activities. Moreover, as staff would not be able to gain their doctoral degrees in EUAS, the SER does not specify how further opportunities are provided to teaching staff to support the achievement of this level of training elsewhere.

The documentation does not specify the different approaches the institution uses to support academic staff with different levels of experience. For instance, in relation to Early Career staff, there is no overarching approach to supporting their development and up-skilling. It is clear from the documentation that policies and practices are in place, however, it is not fully acknowledged the proportion of staff who participate from these processes and benefit from the existing mechanisms within the institution.

The documentation provides little detail on the processes and support available for transition between senior studies and teaching (SER pp 62-69). The described mentoring programme is encouraged to all staff; however, it is not clear how staff have benefitted from this programme and how this is monitored. In addition, the panel learnt from staff during the visit that some members of staff had benefited from paid-sabbaticals to develop their PhD or other research, however, the criteria to allocate time for research or award sabbaticals was not clear. Moreover, based on the meetings with the teaching staff the award of sabbatical leave is based on a local decision between teaching staff and Programme/Curriculum leaders. The need to upskill staff to PhD level was also expressed by external stakeholders, who pointed out that research collaboration with practice is very useful and praised the close links EUAS has with industry.

Similarly, there is little information provided by the institution regarding collaboration among staff in the development of teaching opportunities or research programmes.

The SER demonstrates that there is competition for academic positions, which requires a range of standards in relation to former training and experience across teaching and research. Staff are remunerated in relation to their goals (SER pp 33).

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) “partially conforms to requirements”. Overall, EUAS presents a supporting environment for teaching staff. However, the panel identified areas for improvement in relation to the overarching mechanisms that allow a fair and inclusive set of opportunities to teaching staff to be awarded sabbatical leave, internationalisation opportunities, training, attendance at conferences, and research and knowledge development.

### Strengths

- EUAS showcases an engaged and supportive staff community with strong links with practice across the institution’s professional fields.
- The panel noted a useful and clear Human Resources policy framework, which sets out the overarching goals and support opportunities.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- Planning for widening skills of the teaching staff workforce is clearly one of the aims of EUAS, however, which disciplinary areas incoming staff should represent, what level of experience and background in terms of research or practice skills, has not been fully developed. A more comprehensive staffing plan will be needed to support all the expected goals across the range of areas of work in the institution.
- It is recommended by the panel that a more structured approach to improving language skills is implemented (in particular, Russian-speaking teaching staff), which should include opportunities for widening experiences around internationalisation.
- A number of training and mentoring schemes are available; however, these are not compulsory and a thorough analysis of the impact of training among the teaching staff workforce, does not seem to be available. Further work needs to be carried out to assess the impact of training e.g. on improvements in teaching and learning.
- Particular weaknesses were identified during the visit and in the provided documentation in relation to research and development opportunities. A more structured approach is needed in the design, planning and regulation of these and further analysis on how these opportunities are fully embedded within staff development processes. Monitoring of academic staff development across all existing processes will be highly encouraged.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- It would be beneficial for EUAS to focus on the development of certain groups within the academic and teaching community, such as Early Career or Visiting Teaching Staff, to develop support and upskilling mechanisms that are able to respond to their specific training and development needs.
- A more structured approach to involving and promoting the contributions from international lecturers would be useful, strengthening the links between these contributions and the curriculum to ensure wider benefits among students and staff communities.
- More opportunities for staff to share best practice and teaching methods, would be beneficial to the wider staff community, particularly to Visiting Lecturers.

## 1.7. Study programme

### **Standard:**

Study programmes are designed and developed while taking into account the expectations of stakeholders, higher education and professional standards, and trends in the relevant fields. The objectives of study programmes, modules and courses and their planned learning outcomes are specific and coherent. The study programmes support creativity, entrepreneurship and development of other general competencies.

### **Guidelines:**

In planning and developing study programmes (incl. programmes conducted in a foreign language), the HEI is guided by its objectives, its competence areas and the needs of the labour market, and takes into account national strategies and the expectations of society. The study programmes are based on up-to-date sectoral know-how and research.

The planned learning outcomes are in accord with the requirements for the corresponding level of the Estonian Qualifications Framework, and in planning them the HEI has taken into account the future needs, among other things. In developing study programmes, the HEI has conducted a comparative analysis of similar programmes in leading foreign higher education institutions.

The objectives of the study programme and its modules, the planned learning outcomes, theoretical and practical learning, the proportion of independent work and internship, and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes form a coherent whole.

The development of general competences (incl. creativity and entrepreneurship) and support for the development of a self-directed learner is a natural part of the study programme, and these are integrated with speciality studies.

Expected student workloads defined in the study programmes are realistic and consistent with the calculation that, on average, 1 ECTS credit equals 26 student learning hours. The study programme offers sufficient challenge for learners with different levels of knowledge and skills.

### **Indicators:**

- Number of students per study programme
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

## Evidence and analysis

Currently EUAS is running eight Professional Higher Education programmes: Business Management (EE, RU), Web Design and Digital Graphics (EE, RU), Tourism And Restaurant Entrepreneurship (EE), Quality Management (EE), Game Design and Development (EN), Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation (EN), Software Development and Entrepreneurship (EN), Robotics Software Development (EE) - and 3 MBA programmes: Management of Enterprise (EE), Management of Enterprise (RU), International Business Administration (EN) - and has more than 1600 students.

The panel found that EUAS has all the necessary documents to regulate the design and development of study programmes in place. The majority of them were approved in 2020 as a result of the changes in management (meeting with Vice Rector) and reaction to Covid-19 situation (meeting with Quality Adviser).

The design and development of study programmes follows the regulations and takes into account the expectations of stakeholders. It is, first of all, achieved by established and maintained contacts with a wide range of vocational and specialisation associations (Estonian Service Industry Association, EVEA, ITL, EHRA, Estonian Purchase and Supply Chain Management Society, Estonian Human Resources Management Society, the Designers Association, etc), the Estonian Employers Confederation, Estonian Association of SMEs, International Compliance Association (ICA), The National Institute for Health Development (Annex 36), with other higher education institutions, umbrella organisations, state authorities, national initiatives and programmes (SER, p. 28). Design and development of study programmes as well is highly affected by the needs of the main partner of the University – companies of Ülemiste City (SER, p. 70). This cooperation allows EUAS to be on track with the latest trends, especially in the IT sector. As a result, the curriculum "Software Development and Entrepreneurship" was opened in 2017 (SER, p. 70).

Heads of specialisations receive proposals for the development of new study programmes, study programme development plans or any proposed changes to programmes. These are approved by the Study Programme Council, if approved these are submitted by the Head of Specialisation to the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs. If the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs approves these, they are sent to the Academic Council for their approval. AS Mainor as the owner supports the development of new study programmes and the improvement of existing study programmes and checks that any new programmes are in line with the goals set out in the development plan.

The objectives of study programmes, modules and courses and their planned learning outcomes are specific and coherent (programme curriculum). As stated in SER (page 72), the learning outcomes of the curriculum, modules and subjects are defined based on the expected learning outcomes of the respective study level described in the Higher Education Standard. The learning outcomes are well articulated, clearly stated for each subject and are described appropriately by level. They derive in a coherent way from the learning outcomes of the modules that are supporting the learning outcomes of the whole curriculum. Discussions during the meetings with students and teachers confirmed that the concept of learning outcomes is clear, students are introduced to learning outcomes at the beginning of each module, and lecturers explain how the assessment is going to be organized.

During the meeting with the representatives of the companies, responsiveness to the needs of employers was confirmed by several examples: the course on cultural differences was added to the curriculum on the request of the internship provider and an IT curriculum was introduced. EUAS provides training to the companies, organises common events, etc. In general employers are happy with the contacts established and prompt reactions to their requests and observations. According to the interviews their involvement in the work of Curriculum Councils is more of an ad hoc character - the panel did not meet any employers who would consider themselves as permanent members of the councils.

The ad hoc character of the Curriculum Councils was confirmed during the meeting with the students. At the same time students value the possibility of providing feedback on the modules and teachers after each semester. The information obtained from questionnaires is used as input by the Study Programme Council to make any necessary changes or amendments to the study programmes. The purpose is that study programmes and, thus, the knowledge, skills and dispositions of the graduates meet the needs of the labour market (meetings with students and with the heads of curriculum). The management is easy to reach, the study department is very accessible. The friendly, personalized character of the communication is appreciated by students as well.

Based on the interviews contribution to curriculum improvement by alumni was not strong enough. Although the SER states that it is ensured by collecting their feedback from questionnaires and their participation in Curriculum Councils, the panel found no evidence of their active involvement.

As stated in the SER (p. 70), in the development of study programmes, EUAS uses OSKA reports, higher and vocational education standards, the 2015 Estonian higher education institutions' alumni study and other studies, reports, articles and area-specific analyses. Data from these studies and reports, as up-to-date sectorial know-how and research, is used to map the future needs of interest groups and society.

In developing programmes, according to the SER and the Study Programme Statutes, EUAS is guided by its main objective – to develop an entrepreneurial mindset in society - all applied higher education study programmes include entrepreneurship studies aimed at encouraging students to adopt and develop an entrepreneurial frame of mind in an open civil society (Annex 15). This entrepreneurial mindset was clearly demonstrated by students during the site visit meetings - the majority of the students the panel met are planning to, or are already working on establishing their own business, as they stated, the studies take them “through the life cycle of a start-up,” EAUS provides real world examples of how business is changing and teaches how to put ideas into action.

The taking into account of national strategies is ensured by the participation of the representatives of EUAS in the work of various associations that share national higher education strategies, e.g. the Education Qualifications Council of the Estonian Qualifications Authority, the Advisory Committee on the Internationalisation of Higher Education and Research in Estonia, the work groups on development of job-based studies, the work group on the Smart and Active Estonia 2035 education strategy, etc. (SER, p. 28; meeting with management). The institution closely monitors the latest developments in the business sector and quickly responds to the demands of society. As a result of the collapse of the tourism sector in 2020 but based on the competencies needed to build it in the near future and knowing that the current cooperation models between the sector and higher education no longer work, EUAS started developing the tourism and restaurant curriculum (established in 2016) based on the renewed apprenticeship model (SER, p. 73; meeting with teachers).

Workloads defined in the study programmes are realistic. Students appreciate the flexible timetables. Bachelor programme lectures in full-time study in English are usually from Monday to Wednesday, study of other groups takes place as a session study from Thursday to Sunday. which allows students to work while they are studying. To ensure the cohesion and integrity of the curriculum EUAS organises teaching staff meetings early in the academic year, these meetings explain the objectives of the studies and the curriculum and introduce the latest important changes (SER E&BI,4) to be addressed in teaching. The evaluation of the cohesion of the study programmes led to the merger of the “Start-up Entrepreneurship” study programme, which focuses on developing the competences of start-up entrepreneurs, and the “Creativity and Business Innovation” joint study programme, which focuses on fostering creativity in entrepreneurial environments, into a uniform “Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation” study programme in 2017. (SER, 73).

Confusion around the name of this study programme is still present: some of the students from the “Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation” (EBI) study programme the panel met were not absolutely sure about the title of the programme on the diploma they will receive (some say that they will get a diploma with EBI's name, others say that diploma will have their specialisation on it as a name of the programme). Titles on the programmes on the webpage <https://www.euas.eu/> still aren't clear - both

“old” programmes are presented as current ones. Confusion is present in the presentation of the numbers of students of this programme in the SER and SER of the EBI - Table 2 in SER presents numbers for the Creativity and Business Innovation programme, the table in EBI SER - same numbers for EBI. Some confusion remains - the table shows the admission of 46 students in 2016/2017, but the programme (EBI) was created as a result of merger a year later in June, 2017 (EBI SER).

The development of general competencies (self- management, entrepreneurship, creativity, organizational behaviour, public speaking, etc.) is in place in each bachelor study programme (SER, E&BI; SER WD&DG, SER RSD) and in master study programmes. General competencies address the personal and social development of the learner as well as the creation of new values and were formulated after several studies carried out by the working group (SER, Figure 26). Alumni especially appreciate the public skills gained, students ambassador experience, applied approach of studies, and learning from practitioners (meeting with alumni).

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) “conforms to requirements”. The expectations of stakeholders are taken into account by established and maintained contacts with a wide range of vocational and specialisation associations, other higher education institutions, umbrella organisations, state authorities, cooperation with companies of Ülemiste City and students; the objectives of study programmes, modules and courses and their planned learning outcomes are specific and coherent; study programmes support creativity, entrepreneurship and development of other general competencies.

## Strengths

- EUAS offers students a range of attractive programmes with a well thought out workload, clear focus and understandable learning outcomes.
- Prompt reaction to the needs of employers is ensured by the maintenance of close contacts with a wide range of vocational and specialisation associations.
- The Professional orientation of the study programmes is appreciated by students.

## Areas of concern and recommendations

- While the panel understands that there are the principles for forming curriculum councils, this did not appear from the evidence to be working in practice. More effort could be made to engage alumni into the development of study programmes.
- Information presented publicly on the programmes e.g. their correct titles, should be reviewed and revised across a variety of platforms to ensure that it is consistent and clear.

## 1.8. Learning and teaching

**Standard:**

**Admission requirements and procedure ensure fair access to higher education and the formation of a motivated student body.**

**The higher education institution systemically implements a student-centred approach that guides students to take responsibility for their studies and career planning, and supports creativity and innovation.**

**Graduates of the higher education institution, with their professional knowledge and social skills, are competitive both nationally and internationally.**

**Guidelines:**

Admission requirements and procedure are fair and impartial. In the admission process, student's ability for academic progress on the chosen programme is assessed.

The academic recognition of foreign qualifications is based on international conventions, agreements between countries, and the Estonian legislation.

Learning and teaching process takes into account students' individual abilities and needs and supports their development. Learning offers sufficient challenge for students at different levels. Students participate in planning and implementation of the learning process. Organisation of independent work and face-to-face teaching motivates students to take responsibility for their studies.

Teaching methods and learning aids used in the learning and teaching process are modern, appropriate and effective and support the development of digital culture, contributing – among other things – towards the development of a self-directed learner, creativity, innovation and the development of other general competencies.

The internship is integrated with speciality studies, the requirements for the internship are defined and the student's supervision ensured.

Students are motivated to learn and contribute to improving the quality of their studies by providing meaningful feedback on both the learning and teaching process and the organisation of studies.

Doctoral students plan their studies, as well as their research and development activities, in collaboration with their supervisor(s), setting specific objectives for each year and assuming responsibility for achieving those objectives.

**Indicators:**

- Student satisfaction with the content and organisation of studies
- Alumni satisfaction with the quality of studies
- Employer satisfaction with the preparation of the graduates
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

### Evidence and analysis

Admission requirements and procedures in EUAS are clear and well understood starting from the students and ending with adjunct lecturers. Student applicants submit their admission application electronically via the EUAS website either in Estonian, Russian or English language. Each applicant is individually contacted to carry out an admission interview. Study places are filled based on the applicants' written materials, admission interviews, and the fulfilment of any other applicable specialisation-specific admission requirements (Annex 16 and 17). According to the Management Team of EUAS, there are thirteen foreign applicants for one admitted international student. The panel did not find any issues or confusion around admission requirements or procedures. On the contrary, EUAS has managed to attract qualified and motivated students both locally and internationally (25% of the students' study in English).

While planning studying and teaching activities, EUAS attempts to follow four main principles: the studies are for entrepreneurial students and are performed by entrepreneurial staff; the lessons and

teaching aim for high-level international recognition; it is essential to have a capable organization in place, with everyone aiming for high-level social impact (SER, p.75). The panel witnessed this in practice, especially the first principle. EUAS applies various student-centred principles allowing the students to take responsibility for their studies and career planning. Together with the study department advisor, the student can choose a study load suitable for them based on their abilities, needs, and resources. Based on that, full and part-time study load options are available for each study programme (Annex 18). Both students and alumni praised this approach and their satisfaction with it has constantly increased (SER, Table 23).

Since most of the students are working professionals (according to the support team, the student's average age is 28 years), their motivation is often clearly linked to their personal goals and needs. Students are allowed to complete assignments related to their own lives, which usually becomes a part of the formative and final assessment of each subject (e.g., Business Models and Strategic Management, Managing the Growth of Companies). For MA programmes, EUAS also has a scholarship scheme for the best students. The ones with higher grades can apply for a scholarship offering the students an opportunity to study for free. In return, the students help lecturers prepare their teaching material, do research, support them in supervision, write opponents' statements, etc. For some students and alumni, this information was easily reachable, and they confirmed they have used it, but others pointed out that they found out about it too late for their benefit.

Studies in EUAS take place in two different study forms: a full-time study in English-language programmes, where face-to-face learning takes place from Monday to Thursday, and distance learning in Estonian- and Russian-language study programmes, where face-to-face learning takes place in the form of session studies from Thursday to Sunday 12-15 times a year. Teaching methods and learning aids used in the teaching process are active, modern, and effective based on the students' and alumni feedback. According to the teachers, the selection of assessment methods they use is extensive - both written and oral forms are used, both descriptive and normative methods are used, etc. In most cases, the final grade is divided into small pieces used in multicomponent grading methods. Sometimes students are also grading themselves. The subject "Enesejuhtimine kõrgkoolis "(Self-Management in Higher Education) is in place for first-year students to introduce the study organization and requirements. This course lays the same basic foundation for all the students before they enter into the actual study process. There is also a unique orientation programme offered to international students (Annex 27). EUAS also promotes special tours organised by the National Library about effectively searching specific topics and being more productive in carrying out research. Based on the interviews with the students and alumni, academic recognition of foreign and prior qualifications (Annex 43) is also working well.

To hold video lectures, the IT department has developed a virtual classroom called EUAS Meet. Also, Master's theses are only submitted electronically. Most of the examinations and tests occur in the online environment. The materials of lectures and additional materials are digitally accessible. A system whereby lessons could be viewed online by agreement with the teaching staff was already in place prior to the Covid pandemic, which made it possible for learners to attend classes etc if attending physically was not an option.

Lessons at EUAS are organised in a course system. The basis for preparing the lecture plan is the division plan for the subjects of the study programme. Practical training occurs as cooperation between the student, the supervisor appointed by the organisation offering a place for practical training, and the supervisor (Annex 38 and 39). Often curricula are worked out or updated in cooperation with the same

companies in Ülemiste city that offer both internships and possibilities for recruiting graduates. To foster this relationship, EUAS has developed an e-learning platform for Ülemiste City employers and employees where all Estonian universities can upload their courses. According to the management team of EUAS, the most popular courses are still from EUAS itself, showing the popularity and practical value of their classes for working professionals. Both external stakeholders and alumni also highly value the event "From the university to companies," linking students with potential employees.

The Graduate employment rate is also very high, partly because most of them are already working before their studies. According to alumni, they have been equipped with additional professional knowledge and social skills during the lessons. Most of the graduates have been employed nationally, some of them are continuously involved in EUAS activities (giving guest lectures, offering internships, organizing public events together, being part of the defence committees, etc).

Through the study process, the students are encouraged to take responsibility for their studies and provide anonymous feedback. EUAS mainly uses three surveys: 1) input on teaching staff and study courses twice a year; 2) satisfaction with the study environment and the organisation of studies once a year; 3) feedback on the study programme and the importance of competencies being taught once a year (Annex 20). These feedback surveys are used as input for developing study programmes and the teaching staff's development. Based on the students' and teachers' interviews, the panel found evidence on how EUAS has improved the study programmes based on the feedback received e.g. the lecturer on specific courses was changed, and next year's students reported already much more exciting and integrated teaching. More study and relaxation areas were provided, and the order of the topics within the course was changed, additional taxes (taxes concerning FIE) were explained during the procedure, etc.). In addition to feedback surveys, students are also involved in the activities of the academic council and study programme councils, but according to the feedback from the students and alumni, not very systematically.

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) "conforms to requirements". At EUAS, learning and teaching processes are well planned and implemented, procedures are in place, graduates are happy with the programme's quality, and the institution implements a comprehensive student-centred approach.

### Strengths

- The learning and teaching process takes into account students' abilities and needs and supports their development.
- The students highly value the flexibility of the programmes and the flexibility of the organisation of the studies (timetable, content, etc.).
- The teaching staff use a wide variety of active, modern, and engaging teaching methods.
- EUAS has a sound system of students' feedback in place, with evidence of responsiveness on time.
- Programmes provide learners with good disciplinary skills and preparation for working in the industry, lots of "practical life" within the studies.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- Alumni development could be more structured based on the formal and professional network, not on personal connections (see also Section 1.10).

- EUAS would benefit from a more systematic approach to staff development so that both sides (management and the staff) would be aware of it (see also Section 1.6).
- Alumni could be involved in various teaching activities more.
- Mobility of the students could be encouraged more. The best suitable approach should be found to do it.

## 1.9. Student assessment

### **Standard:**

**Assessments of students, including recognition of their prior learning and work experiences, support the process of learning and are consistent with expected learning outcomes. The objectivity and reliability of student assessments are ensured.**

### **Guidelines:**

The assessment criteria are understandable to students and students are informed about them in a timely manner. Members of the teaching staff cooperate in defining assessment criteria and apply similar approaches.

Assessment methods are versatile and relevant, assess the degree of achievement of learning outcomes (including general competencies), and support the development of a self-directed learner. If possible, more than one staff member is involved in the development of assessment tasks and student assessments. Along with assessments, students receive feedback that supports their individual development.

The HEI supports the development of teachers' assessment competencies.

Evaluation of doctoral students is transparent and impartial. Its purpose is to support the development of doctoral students, to assess the effectiveness of their current work and to evaluate their ability to complete the doctoral studies on time and successfully defend their doctoral theses.

When recognising prior learning and work experience towards the completion of the study programme, results obtained through the studies and work experiences (the achieved learning outcomes) are assessed. Students are aware of their rights and obligations, including the procedures for challenges regarding assessments.

### **Indicators:**

- The number of credit points applied for and awarded under the accreditation of prior and experiential learning scheme (APEL)
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

## Evidence and analysis

The forms of assessment of learning outcomes at EUAS as well as the procedure itself is very well described in the document – Assessment Procedure (Annex 42). To assess the level of achievement of learning outcomes EUAS uses four forms of assessment: non-differentiated assessment (summative), differentiated assessment (summative), subject-based assessment (summative and formative) and module-based assessment (summative and formative). Assessment is based on the criteria that describe the expected level and extent of knowledge, skills and attitudes to be validated by the assessment method. The scale of the 6 grades (0-1-2-3-4-5) is used for differentiated assessment.

Discussions during the meetings with students, alumni and lecturers confirmed the clarity of procedures and criteria of assessment. Students are encouraged to participate in the assessment process (an example was given by the lecturers of International Marketing, Academic Writing), to give

feedback on the assessment criteria. Assessment methods are tailored to measuring the achievement of learning outcomes, they are versatile and relevant to support the development of students. Examples of the most common ones, according to the SER, might be discussions, group study, presentations, simulations, idea map, case study, etc. (SER, Figure 34).

During the site visit students confirmed the variety of the teaching and assessment methods (simulations, case studies, presentations, discussions, etc) and underlined the applicability of the assignments. The teachers have a good understanding of the variety of the assessment methods, both forms – verbal and written – that are used for assessment. A lot of effort is made to ensure that assessment criteria are informative and descriptive and specify the content of learning outcomes in terms of substance, level and context (SER, p. 84)

Teaching staff collaborate in the assessment process starting from the early stage of preparation (teaching staff members of the same module or area usually gather at the initiative of the Head of Specialisation to share experiences and plan the evaluation, continuing through the stage of the carrying out the assessment (study courses/modules with multiple teaching staff members often also have an evaluation task, which is assessed jointly), providing feedback. (SER, 84) Co-teaching was confirmed during the meeting with the lecturers: joint agreement on the learning outcomes, criteria, and tasks is usually achieved at peer meetings. Students are informed on the assessment forms and methods, including criteria for assessment, during the first lecture of the subject (Annex 42).

EUAS supports the development of teaching staff's assessment competencies and coherence of approach by the help of the study designer who ensures that any and all applied evaluation methods, criteria and conditions are in compliance with the EUAS procedure for evaluation. The panel found that it is achieved by strong IT support, training provided to the lecturers and regular meetings with the Heads of Curriculum (meeting with the teachers).

Among the methods of assessment RPL procedures are present. The application of RPL principles is regulated under the EUAS procedure for the recognition of prior studies and work experience (Annex 43), which sets out the recognition of eighty-five study credits transferred on the basis of prior formal studies, additional studies or training as well as prior work experience. To simplify the use of the RPL system, as the SER states, EUAS has also concluded preliminary agreements with partner institutions (e.g. Tallinn School of Economics, Tartu Vocational Education Centre) to accept RPL for certain specific study programmes. The panel was assured during the meeting with administration that the number of students that apply for the RPL procedure is growing each year. Among the students and alumni that participated in the meetings with the panel were just two students that applied for the RPL and they could not provide a lot of information – but in general were happy with the process. The teachers the panel met had not been involved in RPL procedures, some of them appeared not to be aware of the concept.

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) “conforms to requirements”. Student assessment conforms to requirements: assessment of students, including recognition of their prior learning and work experiences, is well regulated and supports the process of learning, the process and methods ensure objective and reliable evaluation of the achievement of learning outcomes.

## Strengths

- Teaching staff collaborate in the assessment process starting from the early stage of preparation.
- Assessment methods are tailored to measuring the achievement of learning outcomes, they are versatile and relevant to support the development of students.
- EUAS supports development of the teaching staff's assessment competencies providing specialized training.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- The panel would suggest raising awareness on RPL concepts and procedures among the teachers. The teachers the panel met were not involved in RPL procedures, some of them were not aware of the concept.

## 1.10. Learning support systems

### **Standard:**

**The higher education institution ensures that all students have access to academic, career and psychological counselling.**

**Students' individual development and academic progress are monitored and supported.**

### **Guidelines:**

The HEI assists the student in developing an individual study programme based on the student's special needs as well as educational abilities and preferences.

The HEI advises its students (including students with special needs and international students) on finding internship places as well as jobs. Students are aware of where to get support in the case of psychological problems.

The HEI has a functioning system to support and advise international students (including psychological and career counselling) which, inter alia, helps them integrate smoothly into the membership of the HEI and Estonian society. The HEI analyses the reasons students withdraw from studies or drop out, and takes steps to increase the effectiveness of the studies.

In order to carry out studies and research, development and creative activities, the availability of up-to-date study and research literature, other study materials and tools (including those for independent work) and access to research databases is ensured. Study literature, materials and other teaching aids are of equally high quality.

To support study activities, timely and relevant information and communication technology solutions have been planned, including the study information system, document management, and e-learning environment.

The HEI supports student participation in extra-curricular activities and civil society initiatives.

The HEI monitors student satisfaction with the counselling services provided and makes changes as needed.

### **Indicators:**

- The average duration of the study by levels of study
- Dropout/withdrawal rate (during the first year and the whole study period)
- Students' satisfaction with the support services
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

## Evidence and analysis

The panel found that EUAS organises studies in a manner that ensures that the student's educational abilities and preferences are taken into account. For the students to whom the usual pace of studies is

not suitable, there is an option to complete the curriculum studying part-time as well as in external studies. EUAS also assists the students in compiling their study plan by offering counselling by an employee of the department of academic affairs. The academic affairs department is open for students and counselling is available five working days of the week as well as during the evening hours or lecture hours at the weekend which shows that working students' time is taken into account.

EUAS offers academic, career and psychological counselling in Estonian, Russian and English at different levels to its students. Students, including international students, are advised by an international student adviser, employees of the department of academic affairs, employees of study centres, RPL advisers, heads of specialisations, educational technologists, IT specialists, the ERASMUS coordinator and other employees as necessary (SER, p.92). Students can also arrange a consultation with a teaching staff member (either by e-mail or at a pre-arranged appointment) by finding the contact details of the teaching staff and staff on the institution's website. During the meeting with the students of EUAS the panel obtained information that these services are not widely used due to the fact that the students often turn to their Head of Specialisation first in the case of any problems and get quick feedback and solutions.

EUAS has an International Office, which is a unit that supports and provides information to international students, both on study activities and related topics, such as working outside the institution, finding a practical training place and discussing career plans (SER, p.92). In addition to the aforementioned, EUAS also organises an Orientation Week for international students a week before studies begin, for the purpose of helping foreign students adapt to Estonian society (Annex 27). EUAS organises and carries out a range of social and cultural activities for supplementing the study programme for international students. Good examples of these events and activities are participation in events of interest in Tallinn (start-up events, expat community events, etc.), courses introducing Estonian society and Estonian culture and visits to different companies and potential future employers according to the specialisation (e.g. Ericsson Estonia) which helps with the integration to Estonian society.

From the SER and during the meeting with the Department of Academic Affairs the panel found that the Student Council is still not restored which, in the panel's opinion, is an area of concern because without a well-established Student Council the involvement of students in the decision making is not systematic.

EUAS provides its students with the opportunity to study in specialisations that implement workplace-based studies. EUAS also organises career days in order to offer practical training courses and jobs for their students. The panel found that EUAS advises its local and foreign students on finding internship places and jobs. Practical training is assessed according to the Student Intern Evaluation Sheet (Annex 39).

EUAS also assists students with special needs by offering them counselling. Tallinn and Tartu study buildings are accessible for mobility impaired students. During the meeting with the Department of Academic Affairs the panel obtained information that there are also support systems available to students with academic learning issues (e.g. dyslexia etc.). All the cases are handled individually.

EUAS states that in addition to regular studies, it strongly encourages its students to participate in various extracurricular activities and civil society initiatives. For example, as part of the studies, EUAS directs master's degree students to show initiative and volunteer in the organisation of their speciality

or in an umbrella organisation. EUAS also creates opportunities for students to volunteer or to take part in conferences and seminars, allowing volunteers to participate for free.

EUAS appears to have high dropout rates in some programmes, the panel was keen to explore which part of the QA system has responsibility for improving this and what steps have been taken to gather information on dropout and address it. EUAS has developed a thorough drop-out prevention system for circumstances where a student either already has problems or is starting to show difficulties in meeting the workload set out in their study programme. If these signs or problems occur the study centre advises the students on the possibilities of completing academic credit points owed and future academic load. Students who have interrupted their studies can also receive counselling from a study centre employee and apply for re-matriculation (SER, p.90).

During the meetings with staff involved in academic administration, including an additional final day meeting, the panel showed a very effective student information system, including tracking students study programme and progress, finance etc. This appears to be well understood and used effectively by staff and students.

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) “conforms to requirements”. EUAS ensures that all students have access to academic, career and psychological counselling and students' individual development and academic progress are monitored and supported.

## Strengths

- There is a good system of students' feedback in place, with evidence of responsiveness of timely manner, individual approach to the students.
- Students' have good access to support and academic staff.
- Flexibility of the programmes is valued by the students, flexible organisation of the studies, flexibility of the timetables and content.
- Students' study information system is comprehensive and meets students' needs.
- Traffic light system for tracking students' progress is working well and helps the students manage their academic progress and their financial responsibilities.

## Areas of concern and recommendations

- The Students Council is not meeting regularly. Formal and systematic involvement of students in the decision making through the re-introduction of the Students' Council is needed.

## 1.11. Research, development and/or other creative activity

### **Standard:**

**The higher education institution has defined its objectives and focus in the fields of RDC based on its mission, as well as on the expectations and future needs of society, and assesses their implementation and the societal impact of its RDC activities. RDC supports the process of teaching**

**and learning at the higher education institution. Support services for RDC are purposeful and support implementation of the objectives of the core process.**

**Guidelines:**

The HEI places a high value on the role and responsibilities of the field of RDC in society and evaluates the results of its RDC activities, their international visibility and societal impact.

The HEI responds flexibly to the current needs of society and the labour market in terms of its research and plans its research in collaboration with enterprises, public sector institutions and organisations of the third sector.

Members of teaching staff introduce students to their research results as well as the latest scientific achievements in their areas of specialisation, and involve students in their R&D projects where possible.

The organisation and management of RDC take into account the profile and the mission of the HEI.

**Indicators depend on the specificities of the HEI:**

- Numerical data:
  - (1) scientific publications by classifiers;
  - (2) public presentations of creative work; recognition from international competitions; reviews in professional publications, etc.;
  - (3) patent applications, patents;
  - (4) textbooks, study aids of various formats, etc.;
  - (5) system development solutions; product development solutions; environmental applications solutions;
  - (6) contracts concluded with enterprises;
  - (7) spin-off companies, etc., in line with the profile and priorities of the HEI; etc.
- Number of scientific publications / creative works per member of academic staff and per employee with the requirement to do research (FTE, by areas)
- Number and volume of externally funded projects of RDC activities
- Proportion of projects with a positive financing decision out of the submitted project applications.
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

## Evidence and analysis

Entrepreneurship is one of the cornerstones of EUAS according to its vision and mission. According to the management team, it should also be visible in RDCA goals. Among the interviewees it was unclear who exactly decides about the research goals and how research goals are set and defined. In the meeting with the management team, the Rector stated that a particular committee decides on the plans. During the meeting with the research team, the Head of Research Affairs said she decides on the research focus in EUAS. Simultaneously, the teaching staff confirmed that they all together decide about the goals and focus. According to the Quality Advisor the research strategy is written by the Rector, her, and other interested persons. According to the feedback received from the school, the Rector, the Head of Research and the Quality Adviser form a working group, which then reviews the results of the RDC at least once a year and sets the goals and directions for the next period. Expert panel witnessed a lack of commonly shared understanding and coordination of the research focus and topics in EUAS. Based on “EUAS Strategy for 2018-2023”, one of the long-term goals of EUAS is to become a full university and there is a wish to be positively evaluated in the fields of social science and culture (business and management research) and life sciences and technology (information technology) (Annex 3. P.3). As for now, their current research activities do not reflect this aim.

The word “research” had different levels of understanding in different meetings, starting from giving a presentation at the conferences and ending with fully financed independent research. According to the

Head of Research Module, research is considered as independent academic research and R&D is regarded as applied research. Thus, the panel heard different understandings about planning research goals and defining the focus.

EUAS 's financial statement says that investments in RDCA were 360 000€ in 2020. According to the data, the investments in RDCA have constantly increased (339 000€ in 2019 and EUR 462 000€ in 2021). EUAS has also developed an RDCA action plan for 2020/2021, including 17 general activities (Annex 47). Unfortunately, this plan does not say much about research priorities within the institution. In the EUAS Strategy for 2018-2023, research is primarily mentioned in the context of the vision to become a university, as distinct from a university of applied sciences, and not so much in current activities or priorities (Annex 3). Still, there is a more detailed plan concerning RDC Activities for 2018-2023 containing analytical information about the universities position compared to the universities offering similar curricula.

There are currently 33 academic staff working in EUAS, twelve of whom also have a direct responsibility to carry out research. EUAS has set a long-term goal of evolving from a professional higher education institution to a university. It is planned to increase the RDCA community in 2021. Two new researchers will focus 100% on research, an IT teaching staff member/researcher, and a leading international teacher will be recruited. At the time of the site visit the posts were still vacant. In general, EUAS has set for itself a target to have 30 academic publications per year. In 2020 EUAS had 15 publications in the ETIS categories 1.1, 1.1. and 3.1 (high level publications) (Annexes 48, 49, 50).

Currently, EUAS has 3 applied research projects running. Additional 2 active projects are in education/study development. 1) Youth Entrepreneurship Platform – without a budget and 2) Teaching and Learning in Multicultural Classroom – Nordplus, with the budget 8000€ (Annex 29). EUAS is trying to sell its applied research capability to companies, but at this stage these numbers are relatively small – in 2020, the total budget for the consultancy was 43,853€ (RDCA budget 2019-2021). Thus, the majority of RDCA funding comes from the institution's own resources.

The most influential research EUAS has been involved in during the past years has been studying smart cities in the example of Ülemiste linnak. EUAS was also one of the significant conference organizers on "Women in Tech" (ca 1000 participants). In addition, EUAS organises an annual research and entrepreneurship conference to allow researchers and students to communicate and link. This event has received positive feedback both from the external stakeholders and students.

Since research constitutes only a small part of all activities of EUAS, it does not have much influence on teaching and learning. EUAS has worked out a support system for presenting and publishing RDCA. Employees can apply for special funds for proofreading, statistical analyses, conference fees, travel support, and software for preparing presentations and meetings, etc. The panel did find in their meetings with staff, that staff's knowledge regarding the level of support mechanisms available was low, EUAS should take steps to ensure that all staff are made aware of the level of supports available. There is also a financial motivational system to award publishing in highly ranked journals. Research support is based on need. The more active an academic, the more support he or she can get. Every academic undergoes an accreditation once in three years, where the number and level (in terms of impact) of publications is taken into account.

During various meetings of the panel with staff from EUAS, quite a few international cooperation partners were mentioned, but there appears to be only a low level of activity between those HEIs and EUAS in research. The goal of EUAS is to build and serve society by offering companies applied research both independently and in cooperation with other local and international partners. Currently, there are

not very many examples of this. International research in the form of co-authored publications is very limited.

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, (unclear research focus, small number of high-level publications, shortage of research funding and activities, at the same time existing support scheme and motivation to do research) the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) “partially conforms to requirements”.

### Strengths

- The majority of the staff is involved in professional networks.
- EUAS has a strong focus on and the links to its surrounding environment a – Ülemiste city that is offering both internship places and recruitment possibilities to the alumni of EUAS.
- Various study programmes promote creativity and development throughout the study process.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- There are not enough research activities and involvement of the staff in various research activities, and a low level of outside funds for applied research. EUAS would benefit from a commonly shared research plan, from more informative general RDCA action plan and focus for having a more substantial impact on knowledge development and exchange across EUAS disciplines.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- Enhanced level of collaboration with international partners is likely to result in a higher level of published output.
- Support and motivational schemes among academic staff with RDCA tasks should be promoted more to motivate the team to publish and apply for research funding.
- More broad scale and impact-full research (publications or impact on the society) should be prioritised.

## 1.12. Service to society

### **Standard:**

**The higher education institution initiates and implements development activities, which enhance prosperity in the community and disseminate recent know-how in the areas of the institution's competence.**

**The higher education institution, as a learning-oriented organisation, promotes lifelong learning in society and creates high-quality opportunities for that.**

### **Guidelines:**

The HEI contributes to the development of the community's well-being by sharing its resources (library, museums, sports facilities, etc.), by providing consulting and advisory services, participating in the development of non-profit sector and charitable activities, and by organising concerts, exhibitions, shows, conferences, fairs and other events.

The HEI involves alumni in activities aimed at the development of the HEI and the knowledge society. Employees of the HEI participate in the work of professional associations and in other community councils and decision-making bodies as experts, directing society's development processes as opinion leaders. The impact academic employees have on society is taken into account when evaluating their work.

The HEI has clearly defined the objectives for in-service training, measures their implementation and plans improvement activities. The HEI plans in-service training based on the present and future needs of the labour market target groups. Evidence-based learning supports the learning and self-development of adult learners.

**Indicators:**

- Number of people in continuing training and other privately financed open forms of study (by responsibility areas or structural units)
- Other indicators depending on the HEI

## Evidence and analysis

There was clear proof in the study outcomes that EUAS promotes lifelong learning in society and creates high-quality opportunities. Many of the representatives of alumni and students stated in the interviews their readiness to continue learning and practical approach to the problem-solving skill. Many of the interviewed alumni representatives are considering proceeding to the next educational level. Based on facts and findings the panel concluded that EUAS initiates and implements development activities, which enhance prosperity in the community and disseminate recent know-how in the areas of the institution's competence. The industry has also valued its efforts on various years and occasions (SER, p. 104). That could also be considered as proof of serving the needs of wider interest and stakeholders.

There is evidence of good cooperation with industry. Some of this is enabled by a good physical location (close to one of the biggest IT industry campuses in Estonia) and there is a noticeable effort to provide specific solutions to specific industry partners. This is both a - strength (focus), and weakness - at the same time (impact on serving the wider interests of society). Considering that the institution is in a self-financing model this should be monitored and considered carefully so as not to become overly focused on narrow business interests at the cost of a wider academic perspective.

There was evidence of sharing resources: the library is publicly available (Annex 8), EUAS premises and facilities are used for extra curricula social activities (SER.p. 96) and the hostel is open for all (Annex 10). EUAS also hosts a range of different events including "HR management hackathon", "Global Game Jam", "From Higher Education Institution to Business' seminars," etc (SER. p. 96, SER p. 103), giving evidence of both internal and outward oriented exhibitions (Annex 51).

The impact academic employees have on society is taken into account when evaluating their work (Annex 33). Although it may be covered in the evaluation process - the panel found no specific expectancy goals on this matter. There was little evidence of involving alumni. Examples include mostly traditional 'From Higher Education Institution to Business' seminars and some guest lecturing and internships. Information on clearly defined objectives for in-service training is presented (SER, p. 105). Although there is some level of involvement of alumni – EUAS does not currently utilise the potential of the alumni. Involvement of alumni in Programme Councils is one of the areas that should be considered as an area of improvement (see Section 1.10).

Qualitative and quantitative measured feedback to the lecturers and other academic staff would help better understand the achievement of goals serving the society. Those are not currently fully measured.

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the panel is of the view that the higher education institution (in the context of the particular standard) “conforms to requirements”. There are a range of good connections to industry demonstrated across EUAS with staff and students benefiting from these and from participation in conferences and other organised events. There is a good understanding of lifelong learning and a good support for the concept. Alumni were supportive of the institution and valued their time there although EUAS could benefit from formalising and exploiting their connections with alumni more.

## Strengths

- The connection to a range of different industries is strong.
- The hosting and organizing of industry benefiting events and seminars takes place on a regular basis.
- Lifelong learning readiness among students and alumni is well demonstrated.

## Opportunities for further improvement

- More integrated and direct involvement of alumni should be considered.
- To serve the needs of the society wider: a variety of courses and projects should be considered (rather than just geared to individual organizations).
- The impact academic employees have on society should be more clearly taken into account when evaluating their work.
- Reconsidering KPIs could be useful for measuring the general and broader impact on the society.

## 2. Assessment findings of the sample of the study programmes

### 2.1. Study programme: Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation (Professional HE)

The Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation (EBI hereinafter) professional HE study programme was created in 2017 as a result of the merger of two study programmes: Start-up Entrepreneurship, which focused on developing the competencies of start-up entrepreneurs; and Creativity and Business Innovation, which focused on fostering creativity in entrepreneurial environments. However, it is still possible to specialise in Creativity and Business Innovation (61 ECTS) or in Start-up Entrepreneurship (61 ECTS) within the EBI study programme.

The general structure of the study programme is as follows: Initial module (24 ECTS); Base module (52 ECTS); Research methodology module (13 ECTS); Written work and traineeships (30 ECTS); Specialisations: Creativity and Business Innovation (61 credit) or Start-up Entrepreneurship (61 credit).

The language of instruction of the study programme is English. The duration of the programme is 3 years (180 credits). The main goal of the curriculum is to make it possible for students to acquire the competencies required for working at different levels of management based on their specialisation and/or operating an undertaking in the Estonian or European economic environment.

As it is stated in the programme SER, the programme has 157 students (November 2020), 44 of them admitted to the first-year studies, 132 students specialising in Creativity and Business Innovation and 42 in Start-up Entrepreneurship. The number of graduates is very low - 3.

Changes introduced to the programme:

- the addition of Estonian language training (levels A1-A2) on a large scale. The volume of Estonian language training is 12 ECTS, where the volume of 1 ECTS of contact learning is larger than usual (13 hours).
- the increase in the volume of subjects required for research. The volume of research methods (3 ECTS > 5 ECTS) and academic writing (2 ECTS > 4 ECTS) increased and the subject of data processing was added (4 ECTS);
- the addition of cooperation between curricula in Estonian and English –the pilot project of traineeship was created (see point 1.3.3);
- the addition of the subject Introduction to Start-up Entrepreneurship to the curriculum Start-up Entrepreneurship, allowing students to acquire knowledge of the ecosystem of start-ups. (SER, 2021).

## 2.1.1. Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

### Evidence and analysis

The programme was developed initially to address the need for an intermediate workforce (talent) for the undertakings of Ülemiste City (and this is one of the primary goals of the institution), especially an international workforce. Entering as a centre of excellence into various developments of the campus, EUAS has the possibility to take an active role in the development of an international work environment and the introduction of foreign talent to Estonia (e.g. the development of the service concept of the International House) (EBI SER, 2).

Expectations of students, employers are taken into account by their involvement in the work of the Programme Council (although the Council is more of an ad hoc character). General feedback on the quality of studies received from students, competency matrices and studies of the impact of entrepreneurship studies is taken into consideration as well (EBI SER, 3).

There is a clear emphasis on the analysis of trends in business and entrepreneurship - national and European strategies are taken into account ('Estonia 2035' strategy, the OSKA report 'Estonian labour market today and tomorrow 2019-2027', 'Outlook for manpower and skills needs: meta-analysis of business education', Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, Startup Estonia White Paper 2021-2027; Estonia-as-a-Service, European Start-up Monitor 2019, etc (EBI SER, 3).

The objectives of the study programme, modules and subjects and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. Development of the learning outcomes of the programme follows a certain order: learning outcomes of the curriculum provide input for the development of modules and that the learning outcomes of modules in turn provide input for the creation of subjects. To ensure the cohesion and integrity of the curriculum, EUAS organises teaching staff meetings early in the academic year, where the objectives of the studies and the curriculum are explained, and the latest important changes introduced. (EBI SER, 5). During the meetings with lecturers the panel found that meetings and discussions on the learning outcomes and study methods with co teaching partners is a common practice at EUAS.

The main responsibility for the curriculum lies on the two heads of specialisations (SER): head of creativity and business innovation curriculum and head of the start-up entrepreneurship curriculum. The panel found that this does not provide a clear picture as to who is responsible for the whole study programme. Even the students that were present at the meeting were not absolutely sure what is the name of the programme they were studying but said that contact with the heads of specializations is very good.

Students are encouraged to give feedback on the programme. Good informal relations are even more important from their perspective than the formal work of the Curriculum Council. So, although it is evident (Figure 28, SER) that the role of the Council in quality assurance is very important, there was not enough evidence that the Council itself meets regularly. Examples of the role of the Council in quality assurance include the following; the Council gives an opinion on the curriculum as a whole and/or the professional training, analyses the correspondence of the content of the curriculum to the objectives and learning outcomes of the curriculum as well as the needs of the labour market, analyses the outcomes related to the curriculum and the outcomes of feedback surveys, makes proposals for amendments to the content of the curriculum; analyses and makes proposals for the inclusion of the external specialists as teachers in the curriculum, makes proposals and recommendations on the addition of new subjects or the amendment or deletion of existing ones, gives an opinion on the correspondence of the learning environment, to suggests changes, if necessary (EBI SER, 4).

The panel found that EUAS supports the diversity of teaching methods - that was confirmed in the meetings with students and teachers. The most popular are: discussion in the classroom, analysis of critical cases, case analysis, brainstorm, SWOT analysis, interviews, group presentations, individual presentations, role play, games, etc (EBI SER, 5). The economic performance of EUAS is positive and is economically sustainable (EBI SER, 6). Material and physical resources are sufficient to support the achievement of the stated learning outcomes. According to the satisfaction polls, carried out once a year, the arithmetic average of the learning environment of the English curricula was 7.53 (out of 10) from 2018-2020. In addition to IT solutions, students are guaranteed access to the library. Movement towards corporate social responsibility (paper-free administration) is commendable. Creativity and entrepreneurship are at the core of the curriculum.

### Strengths

- Procedures of planning and management of studies are well documented, clear and accessible.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- Allocation of the responsibility of the whole study programme should be taken into consideration.

## 2.1.2. Learning, teaching and assessment

- Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body. Students' choice of specialisation is supported.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

### Evidence and analysis

The conditions and organisation of admission of EBI are similar to other programmes in EUAS. Principles and procedures allow fair access to education. Based on the students' feedback, the student's choice of specialisation or part-time studies is also supported. All students can choose between specialisations of Creativity and Business Innovation or Start-up Entrepreneurship.

EUAS offers the students an opportunity to plan their studies and careers. Since most students work as professionals, their motivation is often clearly linked to their personal goals and needs. Students are allowed to complete assignments related to their own lives, which usually becomes a formative assessment and final assessment of the subject. The panel heard in meetings with management staff and students' various examples of how a student-centred approach is used in the studies (flexibility of timetables, changes based on the feedback, updates in curricula, etc.).

According to the students, student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL) into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. The Head of Specialisation consults the students. The selection of assessment methods is broad. Both written and oral forms are used, both descriptive and normative methods, grades are divided into numerous subgrades, etc. Based on the students, alumni, and teachers' feedback, the teaching and study process is appropriate and well balanced.

The organisation of studies, including practical work and training, is based on the specificities of students. The lessons take place in a course system on a semester basis, determined with the curriculum's course distribution plan. Lecture plans are prepared by the beginning of each semester. APEL supports learning. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally. Unfortunately, the current international mobility rate is rather low.

At the end of each semester, students are asked to give feedback on lecturers and subjects. At the end of the academic year, they fill in a satisfaction poll where they give feedback on the learning environment, the organisation of studies, and the curriculum. The feedback received from students has been used on time and in a responsive way; e.g., during the meeting with students, it became clear that

the first-year students already experienced much better organisation of the study than the second-year students in one particular course. This appeared to be as a result of critical feedback from students in the feedback survey last year.

Some support services for students are in place and available for students (e.g., career planning, financial counselling, international student's counsellor, APEL counsellor, the educational technologist, the ERASMUS coordinator, etc.). The first "Help desk" from admission to graduation is the Head of the Specialisation. There are too few graduates to judge their competitiveness in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally

### Strengths

- The teaching staff use a wide variety of active, modern, and engaging teaching methods.
- The programme provides learners with good disciplinary skills and preparation for working in the industry, lots of "practical life" within the studies.

## 2.1.3. Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The effectiveness of both studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

### Evidence and analysis

The EBI programme benefited from the merger that occurred in 2017 between "Start-Up Entrepreneurship" and "Creativity and Business Innovation", showing a healthy increase in the number of students. The curriculum is developed around work experience and access to training and exchange with local companies. Cooperation with local companies allows for opportunities for business development and entrepreneurs 'start-up' (Meeting with Programme Managers).

The programme reflects on the challenges to achieve the above training in international companies, however, international experiences are limited. EUAS benefits from some informal links e.g. the support of three alumni who provide access to a range of national networks and talents, some also including international links. Therefore, teaching is led by a combination of practice-based part-time teachers and a smaller number of full-time members of staff (EBI SER pp15).

Full time teaching staff involved in this programme have either a doctoral or master's degree, together with teaching and work experience. The programme presents a healthy staff/student ratio with 35 lecturers and 157 students on the programme in session 2020-21. A useful range of ages and experiences characterises the teaching staff community, which also includes practitioners and entrepreneurs.

The curriculum offers professional knowledge and a range of skill sets that will allow innovation and business development. Whereas the documentation is clear on the assessment criteria, it does not clearly set out the assessment methods that guide these modules and the structures in place to formally involve local businesses, e.g. how the different forms of assessment, such as essays, exams, etc. fit within the learning needs for each module. International experiences are available at the institution, but these are scattered and a lack of clarity in relation to accessibility to these was evident during the visit. During the visit, clear evidence of the benefits of international experiences in informing the curriculum were provided by staff, such as the involvement of guest speakers as a result of participation of teaching staff in an international conference (Meeting with Programme Managers). Therefore, whereas wider participation in international mobility is expressed through the SER as an aim or priority, it does not seem to be part of a clear strategy that sets out targets and benefits for students and staff from internationalisation, for instance in the development of transferable skills.

Training is offered to staff; however, it is not clear what sort of training opportunities are available, how attendance and impact is monitored and how needs are identified (See Section 1.6). It is mentioned in the SER (p. 15) the introduction of a mentoring programme (in 2014), which would certainly benefit opportunities for early career members of the teaching staff community. Currently the description in the documents shows a more informal approach to sharing ideas and practices through visiting lectures and casual communication channels (e.g. the 'experience café').

Overall, the research development strategy does not seem to be fully integrated with the opportunities offered by EUAS's close links with practice nor international collaboration, based on the research portfolio available to the panel and the information provided to the panel in relation with the emerging research strategy. A clear research development approach for teaching staff would benefit the EBI programme, which should include research plans for staff, publications, etc.

EUAS has a sound Ethics Code of Practice, which guides action and engagement both for staff and students. Students and staff are aware of their responsibilities and follow the principles provided by the above ethical framework. It was evident through the panel visit that external stakeholders recognise students are well prepared, self-sufficient and have clearly achieved soft skills through their studies.

### Strengths

- The student-centred approach is clearly a strength of the EBI programme, where students set their own goals, which are mapped against learning outcomes, guided by teachers.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- EUAS should provide further reflection within the curriculum around opportunities for research and development, including staff and student community's engagement with practice contributions to the workplace and wider society.
- EUAS should reflect on the possible inclusion of sustainability and social responsibility areas of study in the curriculum and develop a clear action plan that considers these in the staff development strategy.

- EUAS needs to understand how personal reflection is embedded within the curriculum, including both practice-work, placement and international experiences.

## 2.2. Study programme: Web Design and Digital Graphics (Professional HE)

The Web Design and Digital Graphics professional HE study programme was created in 2016. The most recent version of the study programme has been approved in 2020.

The study programme is divided into general and specialisation studies. The general structure of the study programme is as follows: Entrepreneurship module (15 ECTS); General competencies module (33 ECTS); Web design and digital graphics module (25 ECTS); Internship and final paper module (45 ECTS) and specialisation module: Web-technologies (62 ECTS).

The language of instruction of the study programme is Russian. The duration of the programme is 3 years (180 credits). The curriculum was created in order to allow students to acquire the basic knowledge and skills of web technology at the level of professional higher education in Russian. A student who has completed the curriculum should have acquired the professional competencies that make it possible for them to work in this field or to continue their studies at Master's level.

As it is stated in the programme SER, the programme has 81 students (November 2020), 34 of them admitted to the first-year studies. Number of graduates is low - 10 (2018/19) and 6 (2019/2020). (SER)

### 2.2.1. Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

This programme provides a professional qualification that allows knowledge and skills in web technology to be acquired at the level of professional competencies in the Russian language. The curriculum was developed following consultation with local web design, graphic design and multimedia firms (SER pp 2). The degree programme is composed of general and specialisation studies through a range of modules covering graphic design, web-based graphic design, digital media and web-

development competencies. As this is a principle within the EUAS, the curriculum also includes entrepreneurship studies.

The development of the Web Design and Digital Graphics programme has incorporated the opinions from external stakeholders through consultation with web design, graphic design and multimedia companies (SER pp 2-3). This led to incorporating the feedback from 20 representatives from these firms, who supported the proposed curriculum. This demonstrates the emphasis placed by EUAS on establishing useful communication and collaboration channels with local and national stakeholders. In addition, the programme development received feedback from alumni.

The overarching principles of curriculum development undertake a thorough internal process, which includes feedback from external stakeholders, students, teachers and alumni, with the final proposal approved by the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs. There are a number of stages described in the documentation that illustrate how this process involves consultation and feedback. However, based on the interviews it is not clear how continued curriculum review takes place and how wider participation from staff and students is part of these processes on a regular basis. At the meeting with students during the panel visit, it was confirmed that students are involved in completing questionnaires each academic year, which include questions about programmes and about teaching staff, as well as open questions.

The documentation provided by EUAS on this programme, evidences an engaging set of modules and courses, which clearly set out learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The teaching components support the learning and allow for reflection in the achievement of the proposed learning outcomes (e.g. Web technologies KVT-003, Photo Editing Photoshop DB-051). It is important to point out that the institution has selected a number of external lecturers and practitioners to contribute to teaching, these are leaders in the professional fields associated with this study programme. Examples include: Anton Vedeshin from 3DPrinterOS, Alexey Sirotkin from Telia AS and Andrei Bövsev from Skype Technologies OÜ, among others (SER pp 3).

It was highlighted during the institutional visit, the value of the flexible study environment with concentrated study sections a month, which allow students to continue working in practice. Staff and students appreciate this flexibility but would value further opportunities for 'team work', which would allow for interdisciplinary interaction and cross-specialisation approaches. In general, the learning and teaching environment is supportive, with students having access to staff for everyday support, as well as to counselling services. The study information system appears to be user friendly and accessible.

During the panel visit, it was evident that resources are available and accessible for the Head of the Curriculum, who expressed no concerns around resource allocation or availability. The budget is managed at programme level and the financial team receives, reviews and approves requests from the different units to prepare the overall institutional budget. The Financial Team confirmed that it is regularly the case that all required expenses are allocated.

A key aspect of this programme which provides a unique learning opportunity at the national and regional level is the fact that courses are delivered in Russian, allowing for students to continue towards their professional studies in this language, following the undergraduate degree in Russian.

## Strengths

- The entrepreneurship approach and engagement with local companies allows most students to access workplace opportunities within their disciplines, which is clearly a strength of the institution.
- Access to this programme in Russian was valued among the student's community.

## Opportunities for further improvement

- The incorporation of further opportunities for international mobility for staff and students, could enhance the learning environment offering access to a range of transferable skills.

## 2.2.2. Learning, teaching and assessment

- Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body. Students' choice of specialisation is supported.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

In developing the curriculum, EUAS requested feedback from twenty web design, graphic design and multimedia employers, specialists and associations. (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p.2.) This demonstrates their commitment to supporting the needs of industry through their programme design. Courses in Russian are unique in Estonia. Strengths of the curricula include the significant number of qualified lecturers and practitioners with industry background. (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p. 2-3).

The conditions and organisation of admissions ensures fair access to education by providing the information about curricula via the EUAS homepage, online supported course materials via Moodle and remote studying solutions (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p. 5-7). A key principle in admissions is that the chance to study must be accessible to many people. Supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes is achieved by a Programme Council consisting of industry experts, students, lecturers and alumni (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p2-3, 9).

The infrastructure and work environment support flexibility of work and modern platforms (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p5). A member of the teaching staff plans not only the activities of contact learning, but also the need for independent work done by students (SER Web Design and Digital

Graphics p9). Students get both formative and summative feedback in each subject and the teaching staff give the feedback in Moodle, in seminars, individually and in groups (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p9). The head of specialisation informs the study designer about the training needs of specific lecturers (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p10)

EUAS has a SIS-based solution for the automatic monitoring of overdue study assignments in order to spot students who need counselling early (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p7) Also the teaching staff is flexible and adjust programme and personalised assignments based on student need (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p9) The system for Recognition of Prior Learning and Work Experience (RPL) can be used within the scope of the studies (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p10).

The organisation of studies including practical work and training by many initiatives: Professional Teamwork Traineeship (10 ECTS) and Creative Traineeship (5 ECTS) in the format of an intensive workshop, (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p2-3, 8) A lot of group work is used as a teaching method in speciality subjects. Professional traineeships (15 ECTS) are carried out in Estonian companies (SER Web Design and Digital Graphics p8).

Graduates of the study programmes are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills. The fact that most of its students also work (over 90%) is taken into consideration and adjustment of curricula's nominal study period could be considered.

### Strengths

- Courses in Russian for students whose language of instruction is Russian are available, this is unique in Estonia.
- There is a good range of qualified lecturers and practitioners, many with industry backgrounds.
- There are strong connections with industry: who provide input and feedback to EUAS, giving practical relevance to studies and feedback.
- The flexible student-oriented curriculum supports students in the organization of their studies and working lives and is valued by them.
- The flexibility of the organisation of studies (part-time studies, free extra year for completion of studies) also helps reduce the dropout rate.

## 2.2.3. Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The effectiveness of both studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

This programme is a professional qualification offered in the Russian language by distance learning for those working. During the site visit students and alumni confirmed that they had strong levels of support and flexibility to enable them to complete their programme. Whilst there are some staff qualified to masters or PhD level the panel did note that there needs to be an improvement in the number of staff with PhDs and that this had been noted as an area of improvement by EUAS itself.

The difficulties of getting part-time and visiting lecturing staff to participate fully in the life of the institution and in quality initiatives was noted in the overall SER for the institution. The panel raised this potential difficulty at the site visit, visiting lecturer staff the panel spoke to did indicate that they felt communication from and with EUAS was good and that information and opportunities for engagement were available to them. The panel met with a number of teaching staff, the majority of whom were visiting lecturers employed part-time by EUAS. During this meeting the panel learned that staff were satisfied with the level of contact and support they received from EUAS; staff outlined a range of ways that they were kept informed and communicated with.

There appear to be good study programme processes in place. EUAS offers staff development opportunities to staff including pedagogical training. The panel was keen to learn how many staff had participated in this training and how it had been used to improve the programme. All staff that the panel met were aware of training opportunities but not many of them had participated in training over the last two years. There did not appear to be a system in place to monitor and track staff development within EUAS.

The documentation suggests that the programme supports the international mobility of students and teaching staff (SER pp 4). However, it recognises that international mobility has not been attractive to many students, as most of them also work. The management of EUAS stated that they are trying to find new solutions and opportunities for the inclusion of foreign lecturers or the attendance of the lectures of foreign universities by the students without having to leave Estonia (Study Programme SER pp 4). The programme documentation contains a reference to students being able to “know developments taking place in their field in the home country and internationally and they can adapt their activities accordingly to meet demand” (p. 2 study programmes SER).

EUAS has placed considerable emphasis in the institutional SER on the need to develop internationalisation and in particular staff and student mobility. EUAS has partnership arrangements in place with 36 institutions. None of the students the panel met had attended university abroad, but they were aware of the available opportunities and stated that work and personal commitments made it difficult for them to consider such opportunities.

EUAS has an applied research focus. Staff are encouraged to engage in research activities which form part of their annual evaluation and their three yearly attestations are encouraged to participate in external groups e.g. Estonian Association of Information Technology and Telecommunications.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- EUAS could increase the number of staff with PhDs and to support staff to complete their Doctoral studies.

## 2.3. Study programme: Robotics Software Development (Professional HE)

The Robotics Software Development professional HE study programme was created in 2019. The first study group (20 students) started in the curriculum of Robotics Software Development in September 2019. The curriculum is created and implemented in cooperation with AS Cleveron. Work-based learning is taking place in the curriculum Robotics Software Development in its most classic sense. Training takes place on the premises/working environments of companies and in cooperation with the student, the employer, and the higher education institution. Traineeship comprises a third of the curriculum (60 ECTS), many of the subjects in the curriculum are practical and the tasks set in the subjects can be solved in a working environment, in teams or individually.

The structure of the study programme is as follows: Entrepreneurship module (10 ECTS), General competencies module (10 ECTS), Mathematics and research methodology module (18 ECTS), Computer science module (33 ECTS), final paper and projects (25 ECTS), and speciality module - Robotics Software Development (84 ECTS).

The language of instruction of the study programme is Estonian. The duration of the programme is 3 years (180 credits).

As the study programme is very new, there has been only one admission to the programme - 20 students in 2019/2020. Next admission will be in 2021/2021 (SER, 2021).

### 2.3.1. Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

The content of the curriculum was created according to the needs of a local company as well as other companies and the content creators included staff from one of the companies. This makes the programme uniquely conform to the needs of the labour market at the moment and in particular to the needs of companies such as Cleveron AS. Indeed, the programme is work-based and fills a gap in the national needs.

The programme also conforms to the goals and development directions of EUAS (Strategy 2018 - 2023). Whilst it would have been difficult to find potential students to make sense of the curriculum, an important step in gauging the student satisfaction with the programme is to ask the enrolled students.

EUAS has done this and the student appreciation of the programme is high. Indeed, in response to comments by students the curriculum was adapted to include machine learning.

It is good to see that EUAS intends to involve alumni in the further assessment of the curriculum as soon as there are alumni. The structure of the curriculum is such that students participate in RDC activities related to real-world problems brought in by Cleveron AS. That would amount to the most well aligned challenges for students of the programme. Thus, the extent of the RDC activities certainly meets the standard. The same can be said for the design of the programme, the way it was developed, and stakeholders consulted. The programme meets the standard for this aspect.

The objectives of the curriculum and the learning outcomes include very relevant aspects that relate to important transversal skills, including the attitude of wanting to continue to learn throughout life. Robotics is certainly one area that experiences the full force of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and therefore will be subject to very rapid development. Staying in the profession means continuously learning to stay abreast of the latest developments, thus a positive approach to lifelong learning is vital in this industry. Transversal skills, including teamwork, critical thinking, learning attitude, etc., which are included in this programme are certainly worthwhile investments in the future of the graduates. The judgment of the alumni on this aspect, when they become available, will be an important aspect to investigate. There is an appropriate matrix of learning outcomes and the competencies they serve. This is certainly best practice and it shows that a careful analysis has been carried out to sort out where appropriate learning outcomes are gained and how they fit into the entire programme. The programme's learning outcomes are coherent and mapped to domain-specific as well as transversal competencies, including entrepreneurial skills.

The students are highly selected and are also supported beyond what is the general norm. The facilities made available by Cleveron AS are at industry level. The study environment would be highly motivating for students. The extent to which they have appreciated the programme is a testimony of their motivation. The idea that the lecturers and students are partners and have close company contact is for university of applied sciences a best practice model. The students are well supported to achieve the learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes are discussed with students. Indeed, the students who were interviewed reported a strong interaction with those responsible for the various courses in the programme and adjustment of the programme if after due consultation it was discovered that there were other aspects of a particular subject that were deserving of more in-depth treatise. This could be considered best practice. For a new and developing programme this is an excellent strategy and is not often applied. In essence, this activity results in students who have a clear understanding what they are learning and how this is useful to them.

### Strengths

- EUAS has designed the curriculum of this programme together with stakeholders from the professional field. Its close relationship with a company from the field to supply the learning environment and support the students is another strength of this programme.

## 2.3.2. Learning, teaching and assessment

- Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body. Students' choice of specialisation is supported.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

The curriculum was created on the initiative of one company: AS Cleveron. It is unusual for a higher education institution to focus solely on one company workforce expectations and this may be a potential risk because company profiles, workforce needs and/or ownership relations or even location of development may change faster than 3 years' curricula's outcome. The curriculum is meant to be taught in Estonian but most of the materials and environments are in English because of the nature of the field. The command of English of the students of this programme was good, so the PANEL does not expect this to represent a problem.

Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education by providing the information about curricula via the homepage (EUAS website homepage). After submission of an application, candidates have to pass the speciality test prepared by AS Cleveron. On the basis of the test results and the motivation videos/letters candidates are invited to the second-round tests held at Cleveron. Study places are filled on the basis of those trials. There is no information published and available about the access for the students with physical disabilities in Cleveron facilities. It was evident from the panel discussion that the students formed a close cohort and knew each other's situation well.

Supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes is achieved by ensuring that the teaching staff includes renowned lecturers and practitioners from different Universities and company backgrounds. The students were satisfied with the expert input from visiting lecturers. The infrastructure and work environment includes facilities from the actual work environment of Cleveron AS (SER Robotics p2; confirmed in interviews with teaching staff and students). The Universities opinion is: "Training in a company makes up at least half of the volume of studies in the case of work-based learning "(SER Robotics p.3, confirmed in interviews with teaching staff and students). The development of curricula is an ongoing process overseen by the Head of Specialisation, who involves various parties. Although this is a new curriculum, the Curriculum Council has met already twice on 19 February 2020 (SER Robotics p4) and in August 2020 (based on Ly Hõbe feedback).

Students' choice of specialisation is supported by a range of different measures. "AS Cleveron pays the study costs and accommodation costs of learners in Viljandi (in a holiday village) and offers lunches and

a monthly scholarship of 400 euros” (SER Robotics p.6). This is both positive and potentially problematic. In the interviews with management the representatives confirmed that the EUAS will support students in case of economic drawbacks for the students and the curricula but there is no current plan for this event.

The organisation of studies includes practical work and training using many initiatives: In terms of the organisation of studies, learners have two classroom days and three traineeship days, or vice versa, every other week, (SER Robotics p.3). The studies take place in the classroom and a practical training laboratory on the premises of AS Cleveron (SER p.6). The opportunity to study in an actual work premises is highly promoted and even presented on EUAS homepage promotion videos. Students who met the panel supported this initiative as well.

Support services are in place and available for students: access to the National library, online courses and Moodle (SER Robotics p8) with all the lectures and supporting materials. The EUAS stated that “satisfaction was high based on the first seminar “(SER Robotics p3) and this was confirmed during various interviews by students. Students get both formative and summative feedback in each subject and the teaching staff give feedback in Moodle, in seminars, individually and in groups (SER Robotics p9). The system for Recognition of Prior Learning and Work Experience (RPL) can be used within the scope of the studies (SER p.84-85; Annex 43). The company also provides a supervisor, who supports the students from their admission until graduation (SER Robotics p10).

### Strengths

- Practical training occupies a considerable proportion of learning. This results in graduates being work-ready.
- The instructors include qualified lecturers with an industry background, but also practitioners. This ensures that students have a clear understanding of the work field. The further development of the curriculum is enhanced by a strong connection with industry, but also by critical students who question aspects of the curriculum and ask the experts to justify the inclusion of these aspects in the study programme. This is best practice insofar as student involvement in co-creation of the curriculum is concerned. The students in this programme are well supported by AS Cleveron.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- The strong student support is a significant investment for the company. At the same time, such an investment is only possible for as long as the company does well. EUAS needs to consider how it would assist students to finish their programme in the event of company failure, however unlikely this may seem.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- The panel sees an opportunity for further improvement to include other companies in the Programme Council to ensure that the learning outcomes are relevant for a wider spectrum of the industry.

### 2.3.3. Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The effectiveness of both studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

The study programme 'Robotics Software Development' has staff who are well qualified and experienced, many currently working in industry. Most of the staff have a master's or doctoral level qualification or equivalent. This is a small programme with an enrolment of less than 20 students. Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students. The panel met with a number of teaching staff, the majority of whom were visiting lecturers employed part-time by EUAS. During this meeting the panel learned that staff were satisfied with the level of contact and support they received from the EUAS; staff outlined a range of ways that they were kept informed and communicated with.

There appear to be good study programme processes in place. EUAS offers staff development opportunities to staff including pedagogical training.

It is noteworthy that oral defence of a capstone project takes place. The panel understands this to be an effective way to ascertain the extent of the candidate's involvement in the work produced.

An ethics committee in place with representatives from faculty management, teaching staff and students. A number of in-programme activities support the students and staff in dealing with ethical issues. Indeed, the panel witnessed the use of the SIS to bring this aspect to the attention of students. During the site visit the panel found that students did not have an opportunity to go abroad. This should be looked at, since international mobility has significant effects on the overall development of students.

As Robotics is a developing subject globally the content of programmes that teach in this field will necessarily be informed by international developments. At the same time, where this concerns proprietary competitive information, it is unlikely to be rapidly disseminated as it can confer advantages (patents and industrially sensitive information). The panel were also keen to learn about the international dimensions of the curriculum; this was not evident in the learning outcomes, other than a reference to students having to be able to speak more than one language. "The student must be able to explain the problems related to their speciality verbally and in writing in at least one foreign language and participate in professional discussions". The ability to speak in a foreign language is important to

be able to communicate across national boundaries. In a discipline like Robotics language is an important aspect of access to information (that is often produced in English). Foreign language ability (mostly English) is most likely to be essential for graduates of the programme.

### Strengths

- The programme has staff working on it who are industry practitioners and who bring their current and relevant knowledge to the programme

### Opportunities for further improvement

- The programme would benefit from increased opportunities for international student mobility.

## 2.4. Study programme: Management of Enterprise (MA)

The Management of Enterprise Master study programme was created in 2006. The most recent version of the study programme was approved in 2019 by the EUAS Council.

The general structure of the study programme is as follows: Economics module (18 ECTS), Business processes management module (15 ECTS), Management module (18 ECTS), Research methodology module (14 ECTS), Master's thesis module (30 ECTS). As a specialisation, this is possible to choose between Human Resources Management module (25 ECTS) or Financial Solutions Management (25 ECTS).

The curriculum is aimed at present and future managers who want to further their knowledge and skills in order to successfully make decisions and participate in the Estonian and European economic environment, manage people and processes, develop the company systematically and according to contemporary economic and management theories and acquire the competencies of the chosen speciality in depth.

The language of instruction of the study programme is Estonian. The duration of the programme is 2 years (120 credits). The number of students in the study programme has remained stable over the past five years - from 52 in 2016/17 to 62 in 2020/2021. Admission has increased from 12 (2016/17) to 25 (2020/2021). The number of graduates has been 10 and 15 in past years (2018/19 and 2019/2020) (SER).

## 2.4.1. Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

The design and development of the study programme Management of Enterprise has a very practical baseline and targets working professionals. In the development of the curriculum, the institution considered OSKA reports, surveys of the alumni of Estonian institutions of higher education, and other documents. According to the students the panel met, the programme is well designed, the level and volume of RDC activities within the programme are sufficient, and there is a demonstrated need for such a study programme.

EUAS promotes a student-centred approach, which is working well. Students have high flexibility in managing their study load and study progress. According to the students, study programmes support creativity and entrepreneurship, and other general competencies. Both the lecturers and the students are well informed about the general objectives of the curriculum. The study programme's goals, modules, and learning outcomes are described coherently.

All involved parties (teachers, students, and alumni) talked positively about teaching methods and assessment criteria that support students in achieving their competencies. Student feedback is also used when preparing courses and choosing the teaching methods, e.g., a statistics course was added to the curriculum, the lecturer was changed, the course sequence was changed, etc. According to the interviews, external stakeholders and alumni are involved in the study processes and curricula development, but mainly on an ad hoc basis, not based on regular meetings or concrete principles.

The physical resources available at EUAS are sufficient for managing and developing the programme in the future. There are enough tools /technology that support the students in their learning process. This was confirmed in the meetings with teaching staff and with students. Due to the need to transfer to distance learning in spring 2020, a particular online option for attending lectures via EUAS Meet was created for teaching staff and students. In addition to IT solutions, students also have access to the National Library and its various databases and the licensed programmes in the computer rooms required for their studies.

### Opportunities for further improvement

- Alumni could be involved in planning the programme much more.

## 2.4.2. Learning, teaching and assessment

- Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body. Students' choice of specialisation is supported.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

The admission of master's students is regulated by the admission rules approved by the Council of the EUAS (Annex 16). An admission interview with each candidate is carried by the Head of the Programme to evaluate the candidate's motivation, entrepreneurship and interest in the chosen field and to ensure enrolment of a well-motivated student body.

The information on the study programme that is publicly accessible on the EUAS web page raises some concerns. Although it is stated in SER (p. 45) that up-to-date information on curricula and admissions is always available on the EUAS website, it does not correspond to the information provided to the panel. Admission to three different programmes with the Estonian language of instruction is announced (<https://www.eek.ee/>, 04.04.2021): Human Resource Management, Financial Solutions Management and International Business Management. The number of credits of each programme is 120. The number of credits allocated to specializations in SER (55 ECTS) does not correspond to the number of credits in the programme Curriculum: (25 ECTC is given to specialisation and 30 ECTS to master's thesis). Admission to Management of Enterprise isn't outlined at all.

A student-centred approach is ensured by taking into account the previous knowledge of students and their expectations. Support is provided with the additional reading materials as necessary. Introductory subjects in the first semester support the levelling of students' knowledge as well. The majority of students are adult learners usually aged 25 and over - in meetings with the panel students expressed satisfaction with the provision of session-based studies and, if needed, individual plans of studies. The latter makes it possible for students to do their independent work at a place that suits them (confirmed in a meeting with students). Alumni are grateful for the good quality guest lecturers and practitioners that were invited to share their experience. Flexible organisation of studies was commended as well. Collection of feedback from students via polls or surveys is a natural part of the quality assurance process (SER, p.48).

Assessment procedures are well thought out, well and clearly described (Annex 42) and are tailored to the experience of the students (students are allowed to complete assignments related to their own lives, which usually becomes part of a formative assessment and the final assessment of the subject, SER). For example, using an acquired method or model to solve or improve a real situation, analysing

this, carrying out a sample consultation, preparing price quotes for services, identifying the elements of the internal control system of the selected company, finding solutions using the service design method and more, (SER, p.9). To ensure the objectivity of assessment, internal training for supervisors and reviewers is carried out (SER, p. 9). Learners are also included via the peer and self-evaluation process - in the subjects Modern Business Models and Social Responsibility and Ethics students give feedback and assess one another's work and, in the subject HRM Strategies and Policies learners give justified grades to their own work and contribution, (SER, p. 11)

A personal approach from staff supports the students in their studies. The Head of the MBA is responsible for admission to the specialisation, processing the written works, participating in defence and conducting information sessions and feedback interviews as well as a first person to contact in case of extra situations (unfair treatment, harassment or bullying, need for career advice).

### Strengths

- There is good flexibility in planning students' studies.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- Currently there is too much confusing information about the exact name of the programme and its specialisations (both among the graduates and the students). The official name of the programme and titles of the specializations should be communicated clearly and explicitly to all audiences.

## 2.4.3. Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The effectiveness of both studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

The students studying in this study programme are taught by competent lecturers who have doctoral or Master's degrees, and often also business experience in the field they teach. EUAS is actively including new practitioners and guest speakers to guarantee updated topics and study examples. This also reflects in the percentage of visiting lecturers teaching in the study programme - 70% out of all the teachers teaching in this programme are part-time. The panel is satisfied that the visiting lecturers are well-known professionals.

The self-assessment of the Management of Enterprise study programme states that at the moment only the Head of MBA checks Master's theses for plagiarism (SER Enterprise management 1.4.2, p. 14), though according to the Code of Ethics there must be more people involved. As Master's theses are only a part of all the written works done throughout the studies, the meeting with the lecturers assured that lecturers also have necessary tools and skills to check home assignments submitted by students.

The Code of Ethics (Annex 21) states that EUAS ensures that its members can view the Code of Ethics in the SIS, but each member is personally responsible for compliance with the Code of Ethics and the implementation of ethical principles. In the meeting with the Department of Academic Affairs the panel received information that all students and lecturers are expected to read the document independently in SIS, sign it and then act on it.

EUAS pays attention to internationalisation by mainly including foreign lecturers in academic activities. The current study programme has one foreign lecturer out of 30. At the same time the panel has no negative comments given the fact that the study programme is in Estonian and focuses on Estonian enterprise landscape. While not including foreign lecturers in study programmes does not raise any concerns, the panel raises an area of concern which is international mobility of teaching staff. Most of the lecturers are visiting lecturers which makes it understood if they do not wish to engage in international mobility.

The self-assessment report (SER p. 76) states that lecturers receive feedback from the Head of MBA either on the basis of the information received by the latter on a regular basis or the comments received from the feedback submitted by students twice a year. Feedback is given during a regular interview, where the lecturer's performance in the previous semester or academic year is reviewed. The report also states that performance appraisals of ordinary teaching staff are carried out once a year on the initiative of the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, and attestation takes place once every three years. As an input for the attestation feedback from students as well as from the line manager on academic activities and RDCA activities are taken into account.

Visiting lecturers are mainly evaluated based on the feedback from the students. In the meeting with the students an example was provided where one visiting lecturer was not delivering its subject very well and after the feedback from the students, this lecturer didn't teach this particular subject during the next semester.

### Strengths

- The programme is taught by a good range of teaching professionals and recognised lecturers, who often are also practitioners in their field.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- International mobility of teaching staff is very low. EUAS should place more emphasis on motivational schemes to support international mobility.