

**Personal Services Study Programme Group assessment
decision
Tallinn University**

26/02/2019

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) decided to approve the report of the Assessment Committee and to carry out the next quality assessment of the first and second level of higher education of the Personal Services Study Programme Group of Tallinn University in seven years with a secondary condition

Pursuant to clauses 41.1 and 42 of the document “Quality Assessment of the Study Programme Group at the First and Second Levels of Higher Education” established on the basis of the authorization contained in § 10 (4) of the University Act and clauses 3.7.3 and 3.7.1 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education states the following:

1. On 28.01.2015, the Council decided to carry out the next quality assessment of the first and second levels of higher education of Personal Services Study Programme Group of Tallinn University after four years.
2. Tallinn University coordinated the quality assessment period of the study programme group with EKKA on 25.10.2017.
3. The Director of EKKA approved by order of 15.10.2018 the quality assessment Committee (hereinafter Committee) for the first and second level of higher education of the Personal Services Study Programme Group of Tallinn University in the following composition

Chris Cooper (Chairman)	Professor, Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom
Eva Werner	Rector and Professor, IMC University of Applied Sciences, Krems, Austria

Berit Skirstad	Associate Professor, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Norway
Mariann Lugus	Secretary-General, Estonian Travel & Tourism Association
Lembi Anepaio	Student, University of Tartu

- Tallinn University submitted the following study programmes for assessment in the Personal Services Study Programme Group:

**Recreation Administration (Bachelor’s Study)
Recreation Management (Master’s Study)**

- Tallinn University submitted a self-analysis report to the EKKA office on 10.10.2018, which was sent to the Committee by the assessment coordinator on 12.10.2018.
- The assessment visit to Tallinn University took place on 12.-13.12.2018.
- The Committee sent the draft assessment report to the EKKA office on 10.01.2019, which EKKA forwarded to the institution of higher education for comment on 15.01.2019 and to which Tallinn University submitted a reply on 22.01.2019.
- The Committee submitted the final assessment report to the EKKA office on 23.01.2019. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision. The report is available on the EKKA website.
- The Secretary of the Assessment Council forwarded the final assessment report and self-analysis report to the members of the Assessment Council on 14.02.2019.
- The Council discussed the received documents at the meeting of 26.02.2019 with the participation of ten members and decided to highlight the following strengths, recommendations, and areas for improvement concerning the first and second level of higher education of the Personal Services Study Programme Group of Tallinn University.

The Committee highlighted the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations for the Personal Services Study Programme Group of Tallinn University:

RECREATION ADMINISTRATION (BA), RECREATION MANAGEMENT (MA)

Strengths

- Although a mandatory feedback system is not ideal, its mandatory nature and the openness of students and faculty ensure that problems are identified and addressed.
- The study programmes are clearly positioned in the Estonian recreation landscape and have a very good reputation. The target groups of the study programmes fully understand the mission and vision of the programmes.

- 3) Feedback from employers and alumni on how study programmes prepare graduates for the work environment is very positive.
- 4) Practical elements are well integrated within both study programmes (especially the Bachelor's program). Both students and employers value the organization and the results of the internships and practical elements of both programmes.
- 5) Both study programmes receive sufficient support from the university and the Institute for their development, and resources are not limited.
- 6) Students value a variety of widely used teaching and assessment methods because they help to achieve the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme.
- 7) The lecturers of both study programme are very enthusiastic and dedicated to their work.
- 8) The Committee was impressed by the awareness, enthusiasm, commitment, and high level of students interviewed in both study programmes.
- 9) Students are satisfied with the support systems offered to them, and the solutions provided to them have been fully adequate (e.g., selection of subjects, finding an internship placement).

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) From an international perspective, it is confusing that study programmes have the same name in Estonian but a different name in English. It is therefore desirable to harmonize English names as well.
- 2) The transformation of the Bachelor's programme into an applied higher education programme has been discussed. However, the Committee recommends maintaining academic qualifications in the study programme to ensure the reputation and sustainability of the field.
- 3) Given Estonia's demographic trend and its impact on the student numbers, the Committee recommends that programme managers and lecturers compare the study programme with international competitors and make appropriate changes to ensure that the system is flexible in the face of possible future "shocks".
- 4) The volume of electives in both study programmes is very large. This can be seen as a strength, but it can also lead to a departure from the core mission of the study programme. It is, therefore, advisable to diminish the selection and develop clear options.
- 5) At the previous evaluation of the Study Programme Group in 2015, it was recommended to provide students with general management courses, including human resource management, management, and marketing. Although this recommendation has been partially followed, it is recommended to include a comprehensive module of business and management courses in the Bachelor's programme in order to ensure the employability of graduates. The module should cover marketing (including digital marketing), human resource management, and organizational behavior. Employers also felt that more project management should be taught.
- 6) It is recommended to discuss the field of event organization among the study programme manager and lecturers and to handle this topic more at the Bachelor's level, taking into account the wishes of the students.
- 7) Although students are required to provide feedback during their studies, they will not be asked to do so after graduation. However, this should be considered in the future, especially as the alumni expressed a willingness to provide feedback.
- 8) The programme manager is capable and committed, but in addition to day-to-day management tasks, there is less time to develop future directions and visions of the study programme, and this can lead to future vulnerabilities in the study programme. It is therefore advisable to appoint a small steering group of leading lecturers to ensure strategic oversight of the program.
- 9) The Committee recommends that consideration be given to relocating teaching of the study programme to the main campus if new building developments allow it. The separation from the

main building has a demotivating effect on both lecturers and students. By residing on the main campus, students would benefit more from interacting with international students and faculty.

- 10) The university uses various technological tools and platforms to communicate information to students. The university has a functioning study information system, but students do not value it very highly. The use of parallel channels causes confusion and disrupts information flows. A more systematic approach to disseminating information is recommended.
 - 11) In the Bachelor's and especially the Master's programmes, the learning outcomes are not formulated to reflect learning at different cognitive levels (from knowledge to analysis, assessment, and creation), as is the case in the European Higher Education Area (Dublin descriptors). Learning outcomes need to be redesigned to more clearly reflect all levels of cognitive learning, state-of-the-art key competences, and skills. This is particularly important for the internationalization of study programmes.
 - 12) A number of e-learning launch plans have been submitted to the Committee, but it is not clear how they will be implemented. Nevertheless, students found that e-learning opportunities were helpful. A strategic decision needs to be made on whether or not to support blended learning. If it is decided to do so, resources will also need to be allocated. Given the state-of-the-art key competencies mentioned above and the aim of the study programme to develop the skills needed for the 21st century, a clear distinction needs to be made across the university between e-learning and simply uploading materials to an environment.
 - 13) According to the alumni, it is necessary to point out more clearly the connections between practice and theory. This is a bigger problem in the Bachelor's program, where students focus more on practical elements than theory.
 - 14) Consideration could be given to involving lecturers from other universities and alumni from other fields. This would help to address the shortage of supervisors and bring new perspectives, ideas, and thesis topics.
 - 15) For both study programmes, it is necessary to develop a clear framework for the workload of teachers and to implement it transparently. At present, it is difficult for lecturers to find time for research.
 - 16) It is recommended that the Institute develop a clear research strategy, including financial support for lecturers to attend conferences and travel. This would ensure a research-based approach to teaching and support staff participation in international projects and research.
 - 17) Representatives of employers and alumni who participated in the interview were interested in being involved in the study programmes as advisors or guest lecturers. It is advisable to set up an advisory body of employers and alumni, which would act as an official channel with the world of work and alumni.
 - 18) Internationalization is a separate goal for both study programmes. However, there is no clear plan for its implementation (apart from the ERASMUS program). It is, therefore, advisable to develop a comprehensive plan for internationalization. The plan should include key indicators and ensure their monitoring. Study programmes should have more international partners and foreign lecturers, a larger number of courses taught in English, and it should also be possible to write the graduation thesis in English.
 - 19) The Committee considers that the physical aptitude test for admission to the Bachelor's programme is discriminatory, does not take into account students with special needs, and is somewhat anachronistic. Nor does it fit in with today's understanding of inclusive education. The program manager and faculty should review the need for this test.
- 11.** Clause 41 of the document "Quality Assessment of the Study Programme Group at the First and Second Level of Higher Education" stipulates that the Assessment Council shall approve the assessment report within three (3) months after its receipt. The Council will consider the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations identified by the Assessment

Committee and decide to carry out the next quality assessment of the Study Programme Group in seven, five, or three years.

12. The Council considered the strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations set out in clause 9 and found that the study programme, the studies provided on it and the development activities related to the studies meet the requirements on the condition that the university eliminates the following deficiencies:
- Government Regulation on "Standard of Higher Education" (SHE) § 6 (3) provides that the requirement that the objectives and learning outcomes of the *study programme are equivalent or comparable to the higher education level learning outcomes described in Annex 1 of the Regulation, meet the requirements and trends of international law governing the profession and, if a professional standard exists, take into account the acquisition and application of the knowledge and skills described therein.* § 6 (4) of the SHE prescribes the requirement that *the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme are formulated in such a way that on the basis thereof, it is possible to assess the knowledge and skills of the graduate of the study programme.* In the Bachelor's and especially the Master's programmes, the learning outcomes are not formulated to reflect learning at different cognitive levels (from knowledge to analysis, assessment, and creation), as is the case in the European Higher Education Area (Dublin descriptors). Learning outcomes need to be redesigned to more clearly reflect all levels of cognitive learning, state-of-the-art key competences, and skills.
 - Pursuant to § 6 (7) 1) of the Government of the Republic Regulation "Standard of Higher Education" (SHE), the conduct of studies conforms to the requirements if *ordinary teaching staff and research staff are available for the studies, who meet the qualification requirements established in legal instruments and whose number is, based on their responsibilities, the volume of conducted studies and research and the number of supervised students, adequate for achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme.* For both study programmes, it is necessary to develop a clear framework for the workload of teachers and to implement it transparently. Currently, the problem is the lack of supervisors, and it is difficult for lecturers to find time for research.
 - Clauses 5.3.6, 5.4.4, and 5.5.4 of the Regulation "Quality Assessment of the Study Programme Group at the First and Second Levels of Higher Education" prescribe the requirements that the *Study process supports academic mobility. Qualified foreign and visiting lecturers and practitioners participate in the teaching. During their studies, students study as foreign or visiting students in other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions.* Internationalization is a separate goal for both study programmes. However, there is no clear plan for its implementation. It is, therefore, advisable to develop a comprehensive plan for internationalization. The plan should include key indicators and ensure their monitoring. Study programmes should have more international partners and foreign lecturers, a larger number of courses taught in English, and it should also be possible to write the graduation thesis in English.
 - SHE § 6 Section 2 provides that the *study programmes and conducting studies are in accordance with internal quality standards and national and international quality standards and agreements.* Clause 7.2.1.5 of the regulation "Conditions and Procedure for Institutional Accreditation", which is a national quality requirement, stipulates that *opportunities have been created for students to study at a higher education institution regardless of their special needs.* The Committee considers that the physical aptitude test for admission to the Bachelor's programme is discriminatory, does not take into account students with special needs and is somewhat anachronistic. Nor does it fit in with today's understanding of inclusive education.

DECIDED

To approve the assessment report and to carry out the next assessment of the quality of the first and second level of higher education of the Personal Services Study Programme Group of Tallinn University in seven years with the following secondary conditions:

Tallinn University shall submit a report on the elimination of the deficiencies described in clause 12 in English by 26.02.2021 at the latest. The members of the Assessment Committee are involved in assessing the fulfillment of the secondary condition.

The decision was adopted by ten votes in favor, none opposed.

- 13.** The Council proposes to Tallinn University to submit to EKKA no later than 26.02.2021 an English language action plan on taking into account also the other areas for improvement and recommendations presented in the report.
- 14.** A person who considers that the decision has violated his or her rights or restricted his or her freedoms may file a challenge with the Assessment Council of EKKA within thirty (30) days after the appellant became aware of or should have become aware of the contested act.

The Assessment Council shall send the challenge to the challenge committee of the Assessment Council of EKKA, which shall submit a written, impartial opinion to the Assessment Council on the reasoning of the challenge within five (5) days of receipt of the challenge. The Assessment Council shall resolve the challenge within ten (10) days of receipt, taking into account the reasoned position of the appeal committee. If the challenge needs to be further investigated, the Assessment Council may extend the term for reviewing the challenge by up to thirty (30) days.

Contestation of a decision in court is possible within thirty (30) days as of its service by submitting an appeal to the Tallinn Courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

Eve Eisenschmidt
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council