

**Assessment Report on Meeting the
Requirements of the Secondary Condition**

Study programme group of
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery

Estonian University of Life Sciences

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Introduction

Background and aim of the assessment

Quality assessment of a study programme group involves the assessment of the conformity of study programmes and the studies and development activities that take place on their basis to legislation, national and international standards and developmental directions with the purpose of providing recommendations to improve the quality of studies.

The goal of quality assessment of a study programme group is supporting the internal evaluation and self-development of the institution of higher education. Quality assessment of study programme groups is not followed by sanctions: expert assessments should be considered recommendations.

Quality assessment of a study programme group takes place at least once every 7 years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education *Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education*.

In 2016, international expert panel assessed the quality of the study programme group of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery at the Estonian University of Life Sciences. As a result, EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education decided at its meeting on March 10, 2017, that the next assessment is to take place in seven years if the universities meets certain requirements set by the Council.

The aim of the current assessment was to evaluate whether the requirements (secondary condition) set by the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education have been met by the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EULS).

Assessor

EKKA invited Prof Ole Martin Eklo for the assessment of secondary condition.

Assessment process

EULS sent their report on fulfilment of the secondary conditions to EKKA on March 12, 2019.

The report is written based on the written materials presented by the EULS.

The current report is a public document and made available on [EKKA website](#) after EKKA quality assessment Council has made its decision.

1. Report on meeting the requirements of the secondary condition, Estonian University of Life Sciences

1.1 General background

At its meeting on March 10, 2017, EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education decided that the next assessment of the study programme group of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery at the Estonian University of Life Sciences will take place in 7 years (maximum term) but set a secondary condition that the EULS should meet in 2 years.

Based on the Assessment Report of the international panel and the Decision of EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education, the EULS submitted the following document to EKKA:

- 1) Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Study Programme Group. Progress Report

1.2 Meeting the requirements of secondary condition

The following are the requirements set by the Quality Assessment Council to be met by the EULS, and the committee's assessment on the developments EULS has made in this regard.

According to clause 6 (3) of the Government of the Republic Regulation, 'Standard of Higher Education', the objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme shall be equal and comparable with the learning outcomes of the cycles of higher education level described in points 1.1 and 3.1 of Annex 1 to the Standard of Higher Education (including a student's skill to critically evaluate his or her own activities when solving problems and/or research questions of the field of study). Subsection 6 (4) of the 'Standard of Higher Education' prescribes that the objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme shall be formulated in a way that they provide a basis for evaluation of the knowledge and skills of graduates of that study programme. According to subsection 6 (2) of the 'Standard of Higher Education' study programmes and the conducting of studies shall be consistent with, inter alia, national quality requirements and agreements. According to point 5.3.7 of the regulation, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', adopted pursuant to subsection 6 (4) of the Universities Act and point 3.7.1 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, assessment of learning outcomes must be appropriate, transparent and objective, and support the development of learners. In the Animal Science study

programmes, the assessment system is not sufficiently linked to the expected learning outcomes, and the assessment criteria must be specified. At times the students are not aware of what is expected from them in the learning process. Students' essays and reports presented to the Committee seemed to consist essentially of reviews of the learning materials, which does not support development of the students' critical thinking.

Assessment of the assessor: the secondary condition is fully met

Comments on deficiency 1.

Based on the Progress report from the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Study Program Group, improvements and measures have been taken to eliminate deficiency 1 and the secondary conditions are fully met. Generally EULS has established a lot of persons in core positions and made a serious action to eliminate the deficiencies and integrated the outcomes from their work into the curricula at both Bachelor's and Master's level by increasing or replacing some of the courses.

According to the report:

- Learning outcomes and expectations are now more clearly defined and communicated to the students. All courses are grouped into submodules based on learning outcomes and the assessment system and evaluation criteria are linked to the intended learning outcomes.
- Evaluation criteria is reviewed.
- Courses have been revised to avoid overlap.
- Lists of study materials have been updated and implemented into OIS
- Objectivity of the assessment criteria have been solved by involving two at least teachers in large scale courses.
- To increase awareness raising, scientific articles, research paper and fundamentals of research are increased in the courses.
- To encourage more critical thinking the role of problem-based learning has been increased by farm visit report, field trip overviews, case studies as group work etc.

Commendations

- Courses at livestock farms outside the university are not always common at universities and this give students important experience from real life which is very important. This practice is encouraged to continue.

Further considerations

- Overlap between courses is often a reason for students not participating in lectures. To avoid overlap, courses should be regularly checked and revised.
- Making multiple choice question and quiz for the students is recommended. This type of exercise will force the student to use their own knowledge to solve questions.
- Teachers are recommended to make assignments and problem-based exercises to make students familiar with the technique to use their

analytical skills to solve problems. Problem-based learning is an important tool to develop the students analytical skill and solve scientific questions.

According to point 5.1.5 of the regulation, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', the study programme development must take into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders. Student and staff feedback is not collected or taken into account for all subjects in a sufficiently systemic manner. Both students and staff consider the current SIS-based feedback system to be ineffective and unreliable.

Assessment of the assessor: the secondary condition is fully met

Comments on deficiency 2

One part of the deficiency 2, feedback is not collected or taken into account. To make feedback more effective and relevant, a number of measures are introduced.

- Once a year the collected feedback are summarised by the Department of Academic Affairs and discussed with the Directors of the Institutes and Study director. Based on the problems and shortcomings an action plan is submitted, which is also discussed with the Student Unions.
- A number of seminars and discussions with students and teachers have been arranged to change structure of the questionnaire.
- As a response to the results from the feedback, a number of training sessions on teaching methodology, digital technology and training related to e-learning has been organized. This shows that the feedback collected is taken into account.

The other part of the deficiency says that the system is ineffective and unreliable. Corrective actions from the university follow the same procedure as outlined in the bullet points above with meetings and discussion with the involved partners:

- Department of Academic Affairs has analysed the collected feedback and presented and discussed them the Directors of the Institutes and the Study Directors.
- Feedback from students is discussed in institutes, in various meetings and in curriculum development committee and at Institute Council involving representatives from students.
- A summary of the feedback together with a proposed plan for improvements is sent to the Student Unions.
- A number of seminars and discussions with students and teachers have been arranged to make aware the importance of the feedback.
- Additional feedback surveys has been worked out by structural units and student associations

The criticisms of the reliability of the system is based on the low number of students assessing each course. The primary ground for complaint among the students seems to be limited information from the university on how university handles the feedback collected.

A new feedback system is under development with a new structure with more focus on learners self-analysis and learner centred questionnaire.

To increase the number of feedback, a limited number of courses each semester will be evaluated.

Commendations

- To reduce the number of feedbacks is a good strategy to reduce the workload for the students and to increase the quality of the feedbacks.

Further considerations

- The new system for information from the University how feedback is handled seems to be better available and interesting for the recipients. Follow-up of the new system will be important.

Point 5.3.3 of the regulation, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', prescribes that teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture. Not all lecturers in the Aquaculture study programme make sufficient use of innovative teaching methods, learning materials or digital tools in the teaching process.

Assessment of the assessor: the secondary condition is met by closing the programme

Comments

The Master programme in Aquaculture has been closed and a new programme in Fisheries and Applied Ecology will be opened combining current curricula of Applied Biology of Aquatic and Terrestrial Ecosystems. According to the report, a significant amount of innovative teaching methods and e-learning solutions will be included.