

Decision of fulfillment of the secondary condition of Institutional Accreditation of the Yerevan Haybusak University

30.06.2021

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to establish a new secondary condition to the Institutional accreditation decision of the Yerevan Haybusak University on 22.11.2019.

Based on § 53 (3) of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) and to clauses 43.5 and 43.7 of the document "Guide to Institutional Accreditation" established on the basis of the authorization contained in § 38 (3) of the Higher Education Act and section 24 subsection 5 of the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter the Council) states the following:

1. § 53 (1) 2) of the APA provides that *an additional duty related to the principal regulation of the administrative act* and § 53 (2) 2) and 3) provide that *a secondary condition may be imposed on an administrative act: if the administrative act cannot be issued without the secondary condition or if the issue of the administrative act must be resolved on the basis of the administrative right of discretion*. On 22.11.2019, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter the Council) adopted a decision to approve the accreditation report,¹ and to accredit Yerevan Haybusak University for three years, with the secondary condition that the Yerevan Haybusak University submits a report to the Council no later than 22.11.2020² on the rectification of the deficiency referred to in clause 14 of the assessment decision.
2. On 24.12.2020, the Yerevan Haybusak University sent the following document to the Council: 1) *Report of Yerevan Haybusak University on the improvement ways and activities based on EKKA's recommendations*.
3. EKKA involved the following members of the committee in the assessment of the fulfillment of the secondary condition:

Helen Thomas	Freelance Education Consultant, the UK
Jacques Lanares	University of Lausanne, Vice Rector, Switzerland

¹ The assessment report is an integral part of the decision and is available on the EKKA website.

²The assessment report is available on the EKKA website.

4. EKKA sent a preliminary report to the Yerevan Haybusak University on 10.06.2021, to which the University submitted a reply on 21.06.2021. On 21.06.2021, the Assessment Committee submitted a report to EKKA on the elimination of the deficiency described in clause 14 of the decision of the Council of 22.11.2019. The assessment was as follows:

Deficiency underlying imposition of the secondary condition	Assessment: The secondary condition is not met
<p>The strategic plan has 11 objectives; four of these link to resources, three to internal and external communication, two to teaching and one to research. Each objective has a number of indicators; however, the panel could find no evidence of targets for these either in documentation or from discussions with senior staff and management. YHU should elaborate fully developed strategic plans, which are based on an in-depth and evidence based analysis, which include specific targets to ensure that priorities are clearly identified and that goals are measurable.</p>	<p>Areas of concern and recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The new strategic plan does not reflect common practice: it is not focussed on the strategic aims, key high-level objectives and related KPIs and priorities are not clear. YHU should review and revise the strategic plan to reflect common practice so that it focusses on goals, high level objectives and KPIs for the five-year period. 2) The strategic plan includes details that properly belong in an operational plan which confuses everyday management activity with strategic leadership. It is not always clear where responsibility lies for ensuring progress on achieving the detailed objectives. YHU should develop a separate operational plan that details the sub-objectives and activities with clear responsibilities, time frames and deadlines which can be reviewed on at least an annual basis. 3) YHU has set a large number of KPIs which are often not measurable and are not clearly related to the goals. YHU must develop KPIs that are specific and measurable and that clearly relate to the goals. The Panel further recommends that the number of KPIs does not exceed 20. 4) Whilst the approach YHU has taken to the development of the strategic plan encourages the engagement of staff, the process lacks strategic leadership which needs to ensure that the plan focuses on the key strategic priorities. It is recommended that YHU ensures that the process of development and decision making on strategic plans has stronger strategic leadership. 5) The strategic plans for different fields and units are consistent in presentation. How the aims relate to the overall YHU strategic plan, however, is not clear. YHU

	<p>should further develop the strategic plans of the units, so that the strategic aims (directions) have associated outcomes which link clearly and directly to the strategic aims of YHU's Strategic Plan so that strategic direction is strengthened.</p> <p>Opportunities for further improvement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) YHU would benefit from exploring how other higher education institutions develop and revise their mission, vision and values and ensure the strategic alignment of them with strategic aims. 2) YHU is also advised to separate the detailed operational plan from the unit strategic plans.
<p>Deficiency underlying imposition of the secondary condition</p>	<p>Assessment: The secondary condition is partly met</p>
<p>There are no requirements for relevant full-time academic staff at the YHU to undertake research. From the evidence seen and heard, the panel formed the view that not all academic staff with full-time responsibility at YHU are engaged in research. This limits considerably any significant staff and student collaborations in research and, most importantly, is inadequate to ensure the critical need for research-based teaching. YHU should develop a more strategic approach to the development of its research capacity and should include specified support for staff to engage in research. YHU should include requirement to undertake research to the contracts of full-time academic staff.</p>	<p>Positive steps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) It is clear that YHU has undertaken some steps and some initiatives to develop the University's research capabilities. This is reflected in the budget set for research and associated activities. YHU has set some priorities for research for the five year period. <p>Areas of concern and recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The strategic plan for research and creative activity includes <i>directions</i> and objectives. Not all the <i>directions</i> are strategic in nature and related objectives are not always objectives but describe processes. The plan lacks strategic focus and consistently clearly articulated priorities. YHU must further develop a strategic approach to the development of its research capacity which clearly articulates priority areas and serves as a basis for identifying key objectives and related KPIs. 2) YHU has identified funds to support research and has allocated the funds to different areas. However, with the exception of funding for the rehabilitation centre, it is not clear how budget allocations are related to the key priority

	<p>areas. YHU should ensure that the support provided for research is clearly related to the identified priorities.</p> <p>3) The Panel found no evidence that YHU had discussed or taken steps to ensure that full-time academic staff have a contractual requirement to undertake research. YHU should include the requirement to undertake research in the contracts of full-time academic staff.</p> <p>Opportunities for further improvement</p> <p>1) YHU should consider how it could use the resources offered by the association for the International European Research Area for international scientific collaboration to share experience with European colleagues in the development and implementation of research strategy.</p>
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5. § 53 (3) of the HMS provides that if an administrative act becomes unlawful after a secondary condition expires, the administrative authority shall promptly repeal the administrative act or establish a new secondary condition.
6. Based on the report of the Assessment Committee, the Council considered that the deficiency on which the secondary condition was based had not been sufficiently remedied.

Consequently, the Council

DECIDED:

To establish a new secondary condition to the Institutional accreditation decision of the Yerevan Haybusak University on 22.11.2019:

- 1) YHU should review and revise the strategic plan to reflect common practice so that it focusses on goals, high level objectives and KPIs for the five-year period. YHU should develop a separate operational plan that details the sub-objectives and activities with clear responsibilities, time frames and deadlines which can be reviewed on at least an annual basis. YHU must develop KPIs that are specific and measurable and that clearly relate to the goals.
- 2) YHU must further develop a strategic approach to the development of its research capacity which clearly articulates priority areas and serves as a basis for identifying key objectives and related KPIs. YHU should include the requirement to undertake research in the contracts of full-time academic staff.

Yerevan Haybusak University should submit a report in English by 1.11.2021 at the latest about fulfilling the new secondary condition.

The decision was adopted by 12 votes in favor, 0 opposed.

7. A person who finds that the decision of the Assessment Council has violated his or her rights or restricted his or her freedoms may file a challenge pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Procedure Act. The challenge shall be submitted to the Assessment Council of EKKA within thirty (30) days after the person who filed the challenge 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.

Challenging of a decision of the Assessment Council of EKKA 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 Procedures Act.

Eve Eisenschmidt
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council