

The decision of the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education

Estonian Academy of Security Sciences The decision on institutional accreditation

17.06.2026

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education decided to accredit the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences for seven years.

Pursuant to clause 53.1 of the document "Requirements and Procedure for Institutional Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions" established on the basis of the authorisation contained in subsection 38(3) of the Higher Education Act and subsection 24(5) of the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (hereinafter referred to as the Council) states the following:

1. The Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (hereinafter: EASS or higher education institution) agreed on the period for institutional accreditation with HAKA on 24 April 2025.
2. By order dated 5 January 2026, the Director of HAKA approved the following composition of the expert panel for institutional accreditation:

Sergiu Vasile (Chair and Secretary)	Professor; Director of the Border Police Department; "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Police Academy; (Romania)
Emily Moorits	Master's student at Tallinn University (Estonia)
Daiga Kupcane	Deputy director in training issues; State Border Guard College of the Republic of Latvia; (Latvia)
Raini Jõks	Director of Tartu Vocational College (Estonia)
Seppo Kolehmainen	Vice President; Public Safety, Finland Division, Patria; (Finland)
Ivo Mežulis	Head of the Development and International Cooperation Department at Fire & Rescue Service of Latvia; (Latvia)

3. The EASS submitted a self-evaluation report to the HAKA Bureau on 17 December 2025 and the HAKA assessment coordinator forwarded it to the panel on 12 January 2026.
4. An assessment visit was made to the Academy of Security Sciences from 10 to 12 March 2026.
5. The panel sent its draft assessment report to the HAKA Bureau on 28 April 2026. HAKA forwarded it to the higher education institution for its comments on 28 April 2026 and the EASS submitted its comments on 17 May 2026.
6. The panel submitted its final assessment report to the HAKA Bureau on 15 May 2026. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision. The report is available on HAKA's website.
7. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the final assessment report along with the self-evaluation report to the Council members on 10 June 2026.
8. The panel's assessments were as follows:

Standard

Higher education institution's management
Learning and teaching

Assessment

The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled
The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled



★ **According to the expert panel, the following deserves recognition**

1. The Academy operates an integrated institutional model for internal security education, applied research and professional development, closely embedded in the national internal security ecosystem. There is a strong alignment between teaching, research, public service needs, labour market demands and broader societal expectations. EASS has a distinctive approach both in Estonia and at the European level.
 2. The micro-credential and Master's-level programme "Countering Hybrid Threats" stands out as a strategically relevant, innovative, and internationally networked curriculum initiative responding to emerging European security needs.
 3. The Academy has a strong practical learning environment, especially the Narva campus with its exceptionally rich specialised simulation and training facilities.
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9. The Council with 11 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 17 June 2026 and decided to point out the following strengths¹, areas for improvement² and recommendations, and suggestions for further development³ regarding the EASS.

9.1 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Strengths

1. Close integration with the national internal security ecosystem, which links the higher education institution's strategy, social mission, and applied research to the needs of the labour market.
2. The institution is characterised by a strong organisational culture that fosters collaboration, shared values, and commitment, and the practice of treating students as partners/colleagues in development and decision-making.
3. The Academy has a remarkable ability to translate strategic objectives into concrete educational initiatives, one example of which is the launch of the Master's programme in Strategic Management, planned for 2027.
4. An important resource in enhancing the quality of the learning environment, improving support services for students, and enhancing the Academy's long-term capacity to provide practical, high-quality education, are the significant investments made by the Ministry of the Interior in the development of the Narva Study Centre and other EASS's facilities, including the construction of new accommodation facilities and state-of-the-art learning environments.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. The implementation of the risk management framework is at an early stage. The EASS should ensure the effective implementation of the risk management system by integrating it into the planning, monitoring, and decision-making processes.
2. The use of impact indicators to measure long-term societal and strategic outcomes is not yet sufficient. The EASS should expand its impact assessment and make it more operational

¹ The strengths listed are achievements that exceed the level of the quality criterion (rather than merely complying with it).

² Areas for improvement and recommendations highlight shortcomings in meeting the quality criteria for institutional accreditation and influence the Council's final decision.

³ Suggestions for further development are recommendations for improvement that do not indicate any failure to meet the quality criteria, and whether or not to take them into account is at the discretion of the higher education institution. Proposals for further developments will not influence the Council's final decision.

by establishing clearer indicators and systematically monitoring the societal outcomes and impact of the Academy.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. A significant opportunity for development lies in the EASS taking on a greater national role in leadership and management development, drawing on its expertise in crisis management, coordination, and public sector governance, and extending its training provision to other ministries, public sector bodies, and civil society organisations.
2. The development of the proposed Master's programme in Strategic Management presents a valuable opportunity to further strengthen the institutional expertise and expand the EASS's role in developing management skills at the national level.

9.2. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Strengths

1. A clear strength is the clearly defined principle of staff rotation amongst academic staff, which supports the exchange of experience, strengthens professional competences, and encourages the acquisition of new skills. Rotation also helps to transfer best practices from partner organisations, strengthens interdisciplinary coordination, and promotes cooperation between government agencies. A particularly good example of this is the Prison Service College.
2. The Academy is characterised by a strong organisational culture and the dedication of its staff. Discussions with the EASS's management and staff clearly revealed a cohesive and highly motivated academic community that is strongly committed to the field of security. In its report, the assessment Council noted that staff satisfaction and pride in working at the EASS were clearly evident during the interviews.
3. The panel also highlights as a good practice the systematic involvement of field professionals in teaching, particularly the use of part-time lecturers and practitioners from operational services, such as in the Rescue College. This strengthens the practical relevance of studies, connects teaching with real professional environments, and supports student employability and professional networking.
4. Full-time academic staff are required to engage in regular professional development through work placements, training courses, and seminars. This ensures that academic staff retain up-to-date practical skills and remain aligned with current developments in the sector.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. A further development opportunity would be for the academy to design and deliver its own pedagogical development programme, for example a "Train the Trainer" course, involving specialists in pedagogy and teaching methodology from outside the higher education institution. The programme could strengthen internal teaching competences and potentially be offered as a professional development course to other institutions.
2. The institution could adopt a more systematic approach to the ongoing development of preventive measures and wellbeing services, as well as to monitoring staff workload and the work-life balance, thereby providing even stronger support for the mental and physical wellbeing of its staff and students.
3. Teaching staff and other staff could be trained in recognising abuse and preventing risks. Teaching staff currently require further training and guidance

on identifying and appropriately addressing cases of emotional or sexual violence, bullying and harassment, as well as preventive risk management in the learning environment.

9.3. INFRASTRUCTURE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Strengths

1. The development of the institution's infrastructure and information resources is clearly aligned with the EASS's long-term objectives and priorities. Investments are clearly targeted and support teaching, research, training, and administrative functions in a sustainable and cost-effective way.
2. EASS's digital ecosystem is well developed. This includes up-to-date study administration systems, document management solutions, e-learning platforms, learning analytics tools, and other centrally managed digital services that effectively support both academic and administrative processes.
3. EASS's learning environment is high-quality and modern, comprising secure and well-equipped study buildings, opportunities for practical learning, access to up-to-date academic and scientific literature, and relevant research databases.
4. EASS's external communications are well managed, aligned with the academy's institutional values and strategic objectives, and ensure that accurate and updated information on the academy's core activities is publicly available.
5. The university was recognised in 2022 and 2024 with awards from the Healthy Campus Programme, which reflects EASS's strong commitment to wellbeing, sustainability, and the quality of the institutional environment.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. Academy's colleges have different approaches to providing students with information about support services and other matters. The lack of a consistent approach may affect consistency, transparency, and the overall student experience. Communication between departments and with students could be more effective, so that important academic and administrative information – including details of guidance and support services – is clearly shared and accessible.

9.4. CURRICULUM PLANNING AND CURRICULA

Strengths

1. EASS values flexibility, innovation, and international relevance in its curriculum development. This is clearly demonstrated through the development of the micro-credential and Master's-level programme "Countering Hybrid Threats." The curricula support lifelong learning and demonstrate how the institution's curriculum development is aligned with its strategic objectives, as well as its focus on internationalisation and interdisciplinarity. The curricula were developed on the basis of a systematic analysis of training needs at EU level in the field of hybrid threats and cyber security.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. It is advisable to continue and further intensify the efforts to streamline and accelerate the process of developing and approving new curricula. A more efficient and agile curriculum development cycle is essential to ensure timely responsiveness to rapidly evolving sectoral needs, labour market developments and emerging security challenges. At the same time, this would further strengthen the institution's capacity for innovation and effective change management.
2. A more effective mechanism should be developed and implemented to ensure consistently high participation rates in feedback surveys among students across all study programmes. In addition, survey results and the improvement actions derived from them should be communicated more systematically to students, including through the intranet, to strengthen transparency and demonstrate the impact of student feedback on programme development.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. The internationalisation of the study programmes could be further strengthened. While international cooperation is already well developed and several short-term mobility and joint programme initiatives are in place, the institution would benefit from identifying additional solutions to support more active bilateral student mobility, with a particular focus on longer-term mobility opportunities where feasible.

9.5. LEARNING AND TEACHING

Strengths

1. Academic study and practical training are integrated in a balanced way, ensuring that students acquire both a solid theoretical foundation and the subject-specific operational skills required in the field of internal security.
2. The institution's academic culture is open and supportive. Lecturers are open to communication and feedback from students and create a safe learning environment where concerns can be raised without fear of negative consequences. This contributes significantly to learners' engagement, trust and well-being.
3. Lecturers have considerable freedom in organising their teaching activities and choosing their teaching methods. Such flexibility supports pedagogical innovation and enables an effective response to the needs of different learners.
4. The institution takes account of students' diverse needs, particularly in cases where students are combining their studies with work commitments. Flexible organisation of studies and tailored teaching methods contribute to the accessibility of education and the success of learners.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. Coordination between ministries, government agencies and the SKA should be improved with regard to proposals for research topics and the supervision of final-year projects. Students would particularly benefit from the appointment of a dedicated agency supervisor when choosing to write a thesis on a topic proposed by the respective agency.
2. As a significant proportion of dropouts in Master's studies occur during the thesis phase, consideration should be given to starting thesis work earlier and providing better support for students.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. To enhance the flexibility of master's programmes, particularly when it comes to balancing work commitments and studies. Greater use could be made of hybrid or online learning options.
2. To strengthen the consistency of assessment practices at all levels of education, it is advisable to consider the appropriateness of group work used in teaching, including establishing clear assessment criteria for evaluating the achievement of learning outcomes by each participant in group work.
3. In order to strengthen the internship system, the Finance College should work with the Tax and Customs Board to identify joint solutions, particularly in relation to the availability of work placements. In addition, dedicated mentors should be assigned with sufficient time, motivation and clearly defined responsibilities to guide students during their internships.

9.6. SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Strengths

1. The higher education institution has a clear, structured, and up-to-date student support system. EASS is committed to supporting learners and takes into account their diversity, including different learning forms, social backgrounds, and support needs.
2. The provision of support services is systematically monitored and continuously improved on the basis of feedback from students. Satisfaction with the study information systems and the e-learning environment remains consistently high.
3. Socio-economic support measures for students are well developed. Scholarships and free support services, including meals, accommodation, uniforms and reimbursement of travel expenses, make a significant contribution to equal opportunities for students, their retention in education, and their well-being. These measures support students' commitment to their studies, as reflected in the fact that drop-out rates in both higher and vocational education are below the Estonian average.
4. EASS's students play an active role in the management of the institution and in community-oriented activities. Participation in the work of the student council, community projects, voluntary work, career fairs, school visits, and preparatory internal security camps gives students a visible role in the life of the institution and in its decision-making processes. This fosters students' sense of belonging, civic engagement, and the development of their professional identity.
5. EASS is committed to supporting the wellbeing of its students by providing sporting opportunities, health-promoting activities, and a supportive campus environment.
6. Communication between students and teaching staff is respectful and collegial, reflecting a strong organisational culture and fostering trust, openness, and learner success.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. At present, psychological counselling services are provided mainly through external arrangements, including chaplaincy and external counselling partners, which are not yet fully integrated into the academy's overall support system. The panel recommends that EASS integrate psychological support services more systematically into the student and staff support framework, ensuring clear access pathways, continuity of support, and sufficient capacity to respond to growing needs.
2. Although there are various support services available, awareness of them is not always consistent. It is therefore advisable to place greater emphasis on clearly and proactively promoting support services, for example, through official information channels, curriculum-based information sharing, the student council and onboarding processes, so that all students are fully aware of the help and guidance available to them.

3. It is advisable to review the structure of the study programmes so that students can plan their mobility periods more effectively. Communication regarding mobility and student counselling should also be strengthened.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. The panel recommends strengthening student academic support structures, including the possible increase in the number of student support and mentoring staff. This could further improve personalised guidance, strengthen student–faculty relationships, support retention, and enhance the student learning experience.

9.7. SETTING THE GOALS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN RDC

Strengths

1. EASS's research and development activities are clearly aligned with the academy's mission, its long-term development strategy, and the priorities of the internal security sector. Research is directly linked to national security requirements, public sector expectations, and future societal challenges.
2. The institution is characterised by a well-structured management and quality framework for research and development, in which responsibilities are clearly allocated at both the strategic and operational levels, including between the Strategy Department, the Vice-Rector for Research and the Research, Development and Innovation Committee.
3. EASS's research is applied in nature, and the findings directly support policy-making, forecasting, crisis preparedness, and evidence-based decision-making within government agencies.
4. The institution has shown visible progress in strengthening research capacity, including a significant increase in dedicated research staff, the creation of specialised research centres, and improved internal coordination mechanisms.
5. The integration of RDC management into the overall institutional quality assurance framework demonstrates a mature quality culture. RDC management is based on measurable indicators, monitoring, and continuous improvement.
6. Another strength is the Academy's close connection between research activities and professional practice, which enhances the relevance, usability, and societal impact of research outputs in the field of internal security.
7. The panel highlights the institution's increasing ability to attract project-based national and international funding, as evidenced by participation in multiple externally funded projects and the growth of international R&D funding, which reached approximately €2.7 million during the reporting period.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. Although the Academy participates in national and European projects, its visibility and positioning in international research networks could be further enhanced. It is advisable to increase participation in international research projects and academic networks, including taking more active coordinating or leadership roles in collaborative initiatives.
2. It is advisable to strengthen cross-university coordination between the units responsible for research and development and the units responsible for curriculum development and teaching to better integrate research outputs, methodologies, and project participation into curricula and student learning.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. Although the Academy has begun to consolidate its research priorities to further strengthen this approach, it is advisable to define more clearly a limited number of priority research areas in which excellence can be achieved, thereby enabling resources to be more concentrated.
2. The Academy's research activities, conferences, scientific events, journal editions and publication outputs should be communicated more systematically and visibly, both internally and externally.
3. The Academy is well positioned to become a leading centre for applied research in internal security. The panel recommends developing clear milestones, strategic partnerships, and measurable objectives to strengthen its role as a national knowledge hub and centre of excellence in the field.

9.8. EFFECTIVENESS OF RDC AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

Strengths

1. EASS's research and development activities are extensive and diverse, encompassing high-level research publications, commissioned studies, various reports, textbooks, and other educational publications, as well as popular science publications.
2. The academy's research journals, in particular Security Spectrum and Turvalisuskompass, support the dissemination of research findings both internationally and nationally, and strengthen the practical application of research.
3. The transfer of knowledge from research and development activities into teaching is effective. RDC outcomes are used in curricula, textbooks, and the development of subject-specific competences.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. The monitoring of societal impact is not yet sufficiently systematic, and there is limited evidence of how research results are used in policymaking, professional practice, and training activities. The EASS should develop more robust mechanisms for monitoring societal impact.
2. Research productivity is affected by structural constraints related to workload and reliance on project-based funding. The EASS should address these constraints by introducing more stable institutional support mechanisms and ensuring clearer allocation of protected time for research activities.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. It is advisable to continue promoting interdisciplinary research collaboration by ensuring closer cooperation between academic units, as well as with external partners, in order to effectively address complex and cross-sectoral security challenges.
2. It is recommended to enhance the international visibility of research results, with continued efforts to secure the inclusion of Security Spectrum in recognised international indexing databases and to increase publication in internationally recognised peer-reviewed journals.

3. Institutional support for science communication and knowledge transfer could be strengthened, including by developing targeted guidelines and tools for the effective communication of research findings to policymakers, practitioners, and the wider public.

9.9. SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR RDC AND CAREER SUPPORT FOR EARLY-CAREER RESEARCHERS

Strengths

1. The research obligations of academic staff are set out in their contracts. This helps to strengthen a research-oriented academic culture.
2. Involving students in research is a strategic priority for the academy, and this is promoted through the curriculum and practical teaching modules.
3. Innovative initiatives such as inspiration evenings and the science festival create valuable opportunities to engage with recognised experts and promote science-focused career opportunities.
4. Specialised support services, targeted training programmes, writing workshops and opportunities to participate in international initiatives, such as the SPARK Erasmus+ programme, are available to early-career researchers.
5. The library and other information resources provide effective support for research by ensuring access to relevant academic databases, research tools, and the timely dissemination of information via internal communication channels.
6. A positive institutional climate supports research development. Staff feedback confirms strong motivation to contribute to the Academy's RDC agenda and recognises the significant improvement of support structures in recent years.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. There is currently no structured pathway for reintegrating doctoral graduates, which limits the strengthening of internal research capacity. Therefore, an attractive and clearly defined career path should be established for doctoral graduates, which would encourage staff who have obtained a doctoral degree at universities to return to the SKA as academic staff.
2. Greater support is needed to enable young researchers to progress from taking part in training courses to participating in projects and engaging in international research collaboration.
3. Monitoring of research support effectiveness is not yet sufficiently systematic or evidence-based. This should be improved by using clear indicators, such as project application success rates, funding success, participation in RDC activities, and researcher satisfaction.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. A structured mentoring system should be established for early-career researchers, together with a formal framework that clearly defines the roles, development objectives, and progression stages of mentoring for PhD students and junior researchers.
2. The pathways by which a student becomes a researcher should be described clearly and concisely. The transition from studies to a research career should be strengthened by making more systematic use of Master's programmes to identify research potential and forge stronger links

to bridge the gap between master's programmes, research projects and doctoral studies. It could also highlight opportunities to participate in research groups, work as a research assistant, undertake internships, attend student conferences, and engage in publishing activities.

3. Support for staff undertaking doctoral studies should be continued and strengthened, including through appropriate workload management, mentoring, and institutional incentives, to further enhance research capacity and academic sustainability.
10. If all assessment areas are assessed as "The requirements of the assessment area are fulfilled", the Assessment Council will decide that the institution's governance, organisation of work, learning and teaching, RDC activities and environment supporting these functions meet the requirements and will accredit the institution for seven years.
11. Based on the above, the Council

DECIDED THE FOLLOWING:

To accredit the Academy of Internal Security for seven years and to award the Academy of Internal Security the HAKA quality mark.

The decision was adopted with 11 votes in favour. 0 were against.

12. The accreditation is valid until 17 June 2033.
13. HAKA will agree the date for the next institutional accreditation with the Academy of Internal Security by 17 June 2032 at the latest.
14. The Academy of Internal Security shall submit to the Council, by 17 June 2028 at the latest, a report on how it has taken into account the areas for improvement and recommendations set out in paragraph 9 of this decision.
15. A person who finds that his or her rights are violated or his or her freedoms are restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the HAKA Assessment Council within 30 days after he or she became or should have become aware of the decision. The Assessment Council shall send the challenge to the HAKA Appeals Committee, which shall, within five days of receipt of the challenge, provide a written unbiased opinion to the Assessment Council on the validity of the challenge. The Council shall resolve the challenge within 10 days of its receipt, taking into account the reasoned opinion of the Appeals Committee. If further examination of the challenge is necessary, the Assessment Council may extend the deadline for examining the challenge by up to 30 days. Judicial contestation of a decision is possible within 30 days from the date of service of the decision by filing an appeal with the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

Hillar Bauman

Secretary of the Council