



HAKA

Estonian Quality
Agency for Education

Initial assessment of study programme groups

**Assessment report for
Master's programme
in Health Sciences
(Physiotherapy)**

Tartu Health Care College

2023



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1. Introduction

Initial assessment of study programme group

The initial assessment is carried out by the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA) if a higher education institution has submitted an application to the Ministry of Education and Research for the right to provide instruction in a study programme group and cycle of higher education.

When an institution applies for the right to provide instruction, it will be ascertained whether the quality of instruction meets the requirements laid down for the relevant cycle of higher education, and whether resources and sustainability are adequate for the provision of instruction.

HAKA conducts initial assessment and re-assessment in three assessment areas:

- 1) Quality of instruction,**
- 2) Resources,**
- 3) Sustainability.**

The quality of instruction is divided into three sub-areas: 1) Study programme, 2) Learning and teaching, and 3) Organization of studies. The area of Resources has also three sub-areas: 1) Academic staff, 2) Learning and teaching environment, and 3) financial resources. When assessing sustainability, assessments for quality of instruction and resources are taken into account in addition to further sustainability criteria.

In the assessment report, the panel shall determine for each assessment area, whether the quality of instruction:

- 1) Conforms to the required standard,**
- 2) Partially conforms to the required standard,**
- 3) Does not conform to the required standard.**

As a result of the initial assessment, HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education makes a proposal to the Minister of Education and Research, whether to grant the higher education institution the right to provide instruction in the relevant study programme group and cycle of higher education; to grant the higher education institution the right to provide instruction in the relevant study programme group and cycle of higher education for one to three years; or not to grant the higher education institution the right to provide instruction in the relevant study programme group and cycle of higher education.

The initial assessment is carried out in accordance with the document [“Guidelines for the initial assessment and re-assessment of study programme groups”](#) approved by HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education on 14.06.2022.

The Master of Science (MSc) programme of Health Sciences (Physiotherapy) was submitted for initial assessment by Tartu Health Care College. The assessment interviews were carried out via Zoom on 11 April 2023.

In order to carry out the assessment, HAKA formed an expert panel, which includes experts from higher education institutions, outside higher education institutions and student representatives. HAKA coordinated the composition of the expert panel with the higher education institution.

The following persons formed the expert panel:

Dr. Linzette Deidre Morris, PhD	Chair of the panel; Head of Department, Assistant professor in Physical Therapy, Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Sciences, College of Health Sciences, Qatar University, Qatar
Ms. Kristel Jakobson-Pallo	Senior Consultant, PwC Estonia; Student at Tallinn University until 31.01.23 - Master in Social Sciences (Political Theory)
Prof. Cliona O’Sullivan, PhD	Physiotherapist and Associate Professor at University College Dublin
Mr. Reio Vilipuu	Physiotherapist and lymphtherapist; entrepreneur and owner of a private rehabilitation clinic in Estonia

Information about Tartu Health Care College

Tartu Health Care College (**THCC**) is a state institution of professional higher education administered by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research. The history of the College dates back to 1811, when the school for midwives was established. Since then, the school has born different names until it was given its current name in 2005. In 2011, the current study building of the College was completed in Nooruse 5 with the EU funding.

The College provides studies on 6 programmes on the first level of higher education (professional higher education curricula), including a Physiotherapy programme, and 2 Master’s programmes: Health Sciences, and Radiography. The latter is the only international study programme thus far in the College, the tuition language being English. The College also has 6 programmes of vocational education and training.

In 2016, the College successfully passed the quality assessment of professional higher education curricula (i.e. quality assessment of the study programme group of Health Care). Also, the College has been granted the right to organise studies on both Master’s programmes for unspecified term.

Table 1. Student numbers by higher education curricula at Tartu Health Care College 2019 – 2022

Registration code	Curriculum	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
194257	Health Sciences MSc	119	99	82	92
205757	Radiography MSc		6	10	6
2290	Physiotherapy	109	113	130	129
2296	Nursing	620	673	734	748
2297, 2299	Midwifery	109	108	115	112
2301	Radiography	69	70	81	96
2304	Biomedical Laboratory Science	83	80	84	87
2305	Environmental Health Specialist	43	41	37	38

Source: HaridusSilm <https://www.haridussilm.ee>

Table 2. General data about the Health Sciences (Physiotherapy) Master's programme

Form of studies	Full-time study
Workload of the programme in ECTS credits	120 ECTS
Standard period of study	2 years (4 semesters)
Language of instruction	English language
Approval date of the programme version at Tartu Health Care College	30.11.2022
Conditions for commencing the studies	Bachelor degree or equivalent qualification in Physiotherapy
Main speciality of the programme and its study load (ECTS)	Musculoskeletal physiotherapy (66 ECTS)
Aim of the programme	The programme creates opportunities for the graduates of physiotherapy education to obtain profound knowledge, advanced skills and professional conduct in the musculoskeletal physiotherapy field in order to increase competence as autonomous physiotherapist who manages working individually or as a team member at various health care system levels, as well as in education and research institutions locally or internationally. Moreover, the programme provides supervised research experience that allows graduates to continue their studies in the third cycle of higher education (PhD).
Title of academic degree in English awarded on graduation	Master`s Degree in Physiotherapy (specialisation in musculoskeletal physiotherapy)
Documents issued on graduation in English	Master`s Diploma and Diploma Supplement in English
Brief description of the programme structure	The programme consists of the following modules: Basic subjects (24.0 ECTS, incl. electives 6.0 ECTS)
Options to complete the programme	The student passes the modules in the order determined in the programme
Conditions for completing the programme	To complete the programme the student must pass the full volume of the programme, pass all compulsory subjects and defend the Master`s thesis
Options to complete the programme	The student passes the modules in the order determined in the programme
Structural unit responsible for the programme	Department of Physiotherapy and Environmental Health

Source: *Self-Evaluation Report, Master's programme document*

Assessment process

The assessment process was coordinated by HAKA staff member Tiia Bach.

The members of the expert panel completed the initial assessment training organized by HAKA. The members of the panel worked through the documents submitted by the higher education institution. During the preparatory meeting for the assessment visit, the panel prepared a preliminary visit plan, which was coordinated with the institution and HAKA. The members of the panel agreed on the topics to be clarified on the basis of the documents submitted by the higher education institution. The division of labor and tasks were agreed in the panel for the assessment visit.

On-line discussions via Zoom with various groups took place on 11 April 2023. The panel met with the College Rector, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Head of Department of Physiotherapy and Environmental Health, study programme manager, Academic Advisor, lecturers, and employers, and conducted all the meetings according to the schedule.

The meetings were held in a highly collegial manner and was formal yet had a light and pleasant atmosphere. Each question was targeted at the specific groups and was satisfactorily answered by the group members. The panel had no issues in understanding or hearing the members of each group. The video quality of the ZOOM call was excellent and the ability of the camera to move around the room made it possible for the panel to see all members.

HAKA sent the initial report of the panel to the higher education institution for comments on 11.05.2023.

The higher education institution submitted its comments on the initial assessment report on 23.05.2023.

When finalizing the report, the panel took into account the comments of the institution and made amendments in the final report.

The panel submitted the final report to HAKA on 24.05.2023.

2. A brief summary of the results of the assessment and their justifications

EXPERT PANEL'S DECISION:

	ASSESSMENT AREA	conforms to the required standard	conforms partially to the required standard	does not conform to the required standard
1	QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION	X		
2	RESOURCES	X		
3	SUSTAINABILITY		X	

Strengths:

- There is an already existing staff body, high-quality facilities and sufficient resources in place at the college, as well as support systems available, which will make implementation of programme easier.
- The programme will be delivered in English to attract more international students.
- The programme is planned in line with key advancements in the Estonian Health system, such as strengthening of physiotherapy services in primary care, which is part of the National Health Plan 2020-2030.
- There is a high level of stakeholder engagement underpinning the planning of this programme as evident from surveys, engagement with external experts and collaboration with clinical partners.

Areas of concern and recommendations:

- The panel concludes that although a risk analysis and a long-term financial projection is provided for the College, the unique issues that the proposed programme will bring (i.e. tuition-fee based, no funding from Estonian government, risk of drop-outs, etc.), warrants a full risk analysis and long-term projection to be conducted for the proposed programme's financial model to mitigate against losses, unexpected costs, etc. Since the programme is not yet launched, it is also not known how many students will in fact be enrolled and therefore there is not yet full assurance regarding the sustainability of the programme in long term.
- The documents that regulate studies are available on the Estonian website of Tartu Health Care College, but they are not available in English anywhere on the website. Since this

programme is aimed at attracting international students, all required documents should be available for current as well as potential students in English as well.

- Although the existing international Master's programme in Radiography at Tartu Health Care College formed a basis for the development of many aspects of the proposed Master programme in Physiotherapy, the concerns with the existing programme need to be considered. The current student numbers on the Radiography programme (Table 1 in the report), for example, are rather low. Therefore, the panel does not have full assurance at the moment regarding the sustainability of the new proposed physiotherapy programme: there is a concern that the expected and required student numbers may not be reached, considering also the fact that the programme will be tuition-based.

3. Analysis of the Health Sciences (Physiotherapy) programme by assessment areas and criteria

3.1 QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

3.1.1 Study programme

3.1.1.1. Launching and developing of the study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national development plans and analyses (including labor market and advisability analyses) and strives for top quality.

Evidence and analysis

The context underpinning the provision of the Master's programme in Health Sciences (Physiotherapy) is clearly articulated and is aligned with the National Health Plan 2020-2030 for Estonia, as well as the findings of the Estonian Labour Market 2019-2027 report which highlighted the growing need for physiotherapists, and the Estonian Education Strategy 2021-2035 which emphasizes the need for further opportunities to move between levels of education. Furthermore, recent legislative amendments under the [Mental Health and Health Services Organization Act](#) create conditions in Estonia for the improvement of accessibility and quality of physiotherapy services in primary care. There is, therefore, a clear need to provide opportunities for Master's level training for physiotherapists in Estonia to promote skills and competencies for service development and project management.

In addition, commencing such a programme is directly aligned to the strategic Development Plan of Tartu Health Care College (THCC), in particular Strategic Objective 1: 'High Quality implementation of the curricula as well as competent graduates who are valued in the labour market' and Strategic Objective 4: 'Internationalization to support the quality of health care education and the recognition of the college'.

In the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the purpose of the Master's programme is stated as follows: 'To provide specialist knowledge and skills focusing on the field of musculoskeletal physiotherapy, taking into account the biopsychosocial whole of the individual, independent of their gender, age, and field of activity.' This new programme is different from the Master's programme at the University of Tartu

(UT) which offers specialization in the fields of pediatric, sports, adult or geriatric physiotherapy. The new programme at THCC will provide opportunities for students to specialize in Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy. In addition, the programme plans to be offered in English, which means that it will have considerable international appeal, as verified by an independent expert review carried out to compare the new programme with existing programmes at UT.

The OSKA report says that important progress is taking place in the course of strengthening primary care services. In addition, physiotherapy services will be strengthened in primary care in the near future. Support letters by employers for launching the programme, presented to the panel together with the SER, state that obtaining a master's degree contributes to providing physiotherapy services at an inclusive level and to the development of the profession. The ability to provide physiotherapy services at the primary care level depends on the presence of high-quality education and training programmes to produce evidence-based, competent professionals. There is also a great need for physiotherapy services in hospital networks, including regional hospitals.

Independent external experts from Estonia, Malta and the Netherlands have given feedback on the new programme. The programme development was based on the Estonian Higher Education Standard as well as on professional qualification standards in Estonia; Guidance documents from World Physiotherapy and the European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education (ENPHE) were considered. The programme delivered in English would help graduates to have a greater potential in the international labour market and will provide graduates with more opportunities to continue their studies at the doctoral level abroad. The rationale for this programme based on the points discussed above was also reinforced by meeting with employers on 11th April 2023.

The programme strives for top quality as evidenced by the College's processes already in place for existing programmes (i.e. the Physiotherapy programme on the first level of higher education at THCC) in terms of internal and external evaluations.

The panel concludes that the launch and development of the proposed Master's in Health Sciences study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national development plans and analyses (including labor market and advisability analyses) and strives for top quality.

3.1.1.2. Employers and other stakeholders of the study programme group are involved in the study programme's development.

Evidence and analysis

Employers and end-users were consulted in terms of the need for the Master level programme. As outlined in the SER and in additional documents, the team at THCC carried out a survey in March 2021 among physiotherapists working in Estonia when planning the opening of the Masters programme in Physiotherapy at THCC. Results of the survey (2021) conducted among physiotherapists (n = 209) showed that 71.8% (n = 150) of the respondents consider Master's degree important for their future, supporting better career opportunities which is corresponding to the possibilities and needs highlighted by the employers.

In addition, the support of employers and the need for the programme is evident via letters of support from six employers and a board member for the Estonian Physiotherapist Association. According to the employers' perception, physiotherapists with Master's degree are needed for the development of

new services and for the management of development projects (Support Letter of Tartu University Hospital of 14.04.2021).

Feedback from students and alumni, opinion of the employers and the Estonian Association of Physiotherapists as well as the recommendations of international collaboration partners was also taken into account during programme development.

It was further evident from our meeting with employers on 11 April 2023, that there are strong and sustainable partnerships between THCC and their clinical partners, with a high level of support, commitment and cooperation for internships between THCC and clinical partners.

Lastly, it is planned that a programme board/curriculum council, consisting of staff, employers, students and alumni representatives, who will meet twice a year, will be established upon commencement of the new Master's programme to review stakeholder feedback and oversee quality assurance mechanisms.

The panel concludes that relevant employers and other stakeholders were adequately involved in the study programme's development.

3.1.1.3. The study programme meets the requirements and trends in international legislation that regulate the professional field, and if an occupational qualification standard exists takes into consideration the acquisition and implementation of the knowledge and skills described therein.

Evidence and analysis

In formulation of the new study programme, guidance documents from World Physiotherapy and the European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education (ENPHE) were taken into account, ensuring that the programme meets the requirements and trends in international legislation that regulate the professional field. Programme development was also based on the Higher Education Act and Higher Education Standard in Estonia as well as the occupational qualification standards for physiotherapist levels 6 and 7 in Estonia.

The panel concludes that the proposed Master's study programme meets the requirements and trends in international legislation that regulate the professional field. Occupational qualification standards for physiotherapists were also taken into account.

3.1.1.4. The learning outcomes of the study programme are equivalent and comparable to the learning outcomes of the academic cycles of higher education described in Annex 1 of the Standard of Higher Education.

Evidence and analysis

The learning outcomes of the study programme are equivalent and comparable to the learning outcomes of the second cycle of higher education described in Annex 1 of the Standard of Higher Education and are comprehensively mapped in Annex 3 of the Self-Evaluation Report.

The panel concludes that the learning outcomes of the proposed Master's study programme are equivalent and comparable to the learning outcomes of the relevant academic cycle of higher education.

3.1.1.5. Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole. The title of the study programme is consistent with the content and the structure, and the content of the study programme supports the acquisition of the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme.

Evidence and analysis

The title of the programme is *Master of Science Programme in Health Sciences (Physiotherapy)* and it is consistent with the content and structure.

From the syllabus, the modules are summarized as follows:

Basic subjects:

1. Counselling methods and techniques (3 ECTS) (*focus on communication*)
2. Learning and teaching (6 ECTS) (*focus on teaching and supervisions, and learning needs*)
3. Management and entrepreneurship (6 ECTS)
4. Professional development in international cooperation (3 ECTS) (*includes the Sustainable Development Goals*)
5. Crisis psychology – 3 ECTS
6. Electives – 6 ECTS

Specialist subjects:

1. Functional anatomy and kinesiology masterclass (7.5 ECTS)
2. Functional radiology and diagnostic imaging for physiotherapists (3 ECTS)
3. Practical posture and movement analysis masterclass (4.5 ECTS)
4. Prosthetics and orthotics (3 ECTS)
5. Biopsychosocial management of the orthopaedic patient/client in physiotherapy I (6 ECTS including internship)
6. Physiotherapy for pain management (4.5 ECTS including internship)
7. Manual therapy (3 ECTS including internship)
8. Health promotion and wellbeing (7.5 ECTS including internship)
9. Basic body awareness therapy (6 ECTS including internship)
10. Biopsychosocial management of the orthopaedic patient/client in physiotherapy II (3 ECTS)
11. Final internship (9 ECTS)

Research

1. Master of Science I (focus on research methodology) 3 ECTS
2. Master of Science II (focus on academic writing and research ethics) 3 ECTS
3. Master of Science III (focus on data collection and biostatistics) 6 ECTS
4. Master of Science IV (focus on data collection and biostatistics) 3 ECTS
5. Master of Science V (focus on presentations) 3 ECTS
6. Master of Science VI (focus on master thesis) 12 ECTS

The programme goals are clearly articulated and are aligned with the Standard for Higher Education in Estonia and content and module outcomes support acquisition of learning of students.

The learning outcomes for each module are clearly set out as well as the topics covered. The learning techniques/study methods are listed. The learning outcomes for each of the three major study areas are clustered and mapped to the programme outcomes (Annex 3 of the SER). The content of the study programme, in terms of basic subjects, specialized subjects with integrated internships and research studies, supports learning development and acquisition of the programme learning outcomes.

The panel concludes that the various modules of the proposed Master's programme and the content, form a coherent programme which is aligned with the national and international standards related to physiotherapy education.

3.1.1.6. The joint study programme and cooperation agreement thereof meet the requirements set in subsections 11 and 19 of the Higher Education Act.

NOT APPLICABLE

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: STUDY PROGRAMME

From the documentation submitted and interviews with institutional leads, teaching staff, employers and clinical partner representatives, the panel concludes that THCC conforms to all requirements under Section 3.1.1.

Key national and institutional strategies such as the National Health Plan, Estonian Education Strategy and the THCC Development Plan underpinned development of the new programme. Guidance documents from World Physiotherapy and the European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education (ENPHE) were considered, ensuring that the programme meets the requirements and trends in international legislation that regulate the professional field. There was a deep level of engagement with stakeholders that informed programme development and design, including engagement with clinical partners, physiotherapists (via survey) and international experts from Malta and the Netherlands. Finally, the programme content will ensure that students achieve the learning goals of the programme.

Strengths

- From the documentation and meetings with institutional leads, teaching staff and employers, it is evident that the programme is planned in line with key advancements in the Estonian Health system, such as strengthening of physiotherapy services in primary care, which is part of the National Health Plan 2020-2030.
- It is clear that high levels of stakeholder engagement underpinned the planning of this programme, as evident from surveys, engagement with external experts and high levels of collaboration with clinical partners.

3.1.2 Learning and Teaching

3.1.2.1. Conditions for admission and graduation are clear and transparent; requirements to prospective students stem from prerequisites for the completion of the study programme.

Evidence and analysis

The size of student group is planned to be 12 to 16 persons. Conditions for commencing the studies are a Bachelor degree or equivalent qualification in Physiotherapy. The document “Study regulations” of THCC that was adopted by the College Council on 28 April 2021, states conditions for admission to the programme. Education and vocational education admission criteria are provided in “Rules of Student Admissions of Tartu Health Care College”.

The SER also states clear conditions for admission to the proposed Master’s programme as follows: the average grade of the prior education level and the result of the admission interview. The latter forms 60% of the final score and is essential to ensure admission of learning oriented and self-directed applicants who can already formulate the goals to be achieved by their studies, at admission.

The applicants must submit the documents certifying their prior educational level or the equivalent qualification, certifying the completion of physiotherapy education at the first cycle of higher education, and a proof of English language proficiency. All documents submitted by applicants from the third countries must be verified by the Estonian ENIC/NARIC Centre in order to ensure that the foreign qualification is recognized.

The committee evaluating the admission interviews comprises of two teachers, including the Programme Manager, as well as the Specialist of International Relations of the College and a representative of the Estonian Physiotherapists’ Association.

Strategies to advertise the programme are in place on how to make information about the requirements and organization of admission available to potential applicants through different information channels prior to the beginning of admission.

From the interviews the panel understood that THCC has valuable experience in admission as they opened Master’s programme in Health Sciences in 2019, and a similar international Master’s programme is running in Radiography since 2020; both Masters’ programmes have successfully passed re-evaluation by the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA).

Based on the SER, it is stated that to finish formal education and to be issued documents proving the relevant education, a learner must fully complete the curriculum. It is therefore clear that all subjects/modules are assessed and the final assessment for each module must be passed in order to complete the curriculum. It is also stated in the SER that a learner is entitled to take up to two final re-assessments without charge after he or she has failed the final assessment in one subject or module, and/or one re-assessment of practical training, and/or defence of the final thesis and final exam.

The panel concludes that conditions for admission to and graduation from the proposed Master’s programme at THCC are clear and transparent and are aligned with the College’s study regulations.

3.1.2.2. Academic staff members to be involved are aware of the objectives of the study programme and their role in achieving these objectives.

Evidence and analysis

The Master's Programme in Health Sciences (Physiotherapy) has been developed by teachers of the current Physiotherapy curriculum at the College. In the development process the following has been taken into account: the content of basic physiotherapy curriculum, feedback from students and alumni, opinion of the employers and the Estonian Association of Physiotherapists as well as the recommendations of international collaboration partners. According to the additional material provided by the College, the academic staff of the existing Physiotherapy Bachelor's programme (some of who will be teaching on the Master's programme) have also given their input into the Development Plan of THCC 2020-2025 and formed a vision for development of the curriculum for the next five years (2020-2025).

Annex 3 in the SER provides a comparison of the programme and module outcomes. Currently the syllabi have clear learning outcomes and assessment methods achieving those goals. The chosen assessment methods are designed to facilitate the growth and progress of students throughout the programme. These methods incorporate a diverse range of assessment techniques, tailored to align with the objectives and learning outcomes of each subject. It was well clarified during the interview with the academic staff members that they were aware of the objectives of the study programme and the process of how content, practical training and internship is put together. It was also clarified during these meeting how the necessary learning outcomes for Occupational Qualification Standard Physiotherapist level 7 are achieved. These necessary professional competencies are tested with OSCE exam.

The panel concludes the academic staff members to be involved in the proposed Master's programme at THCC are aware of the objectives of the study programme and their role in achieving these objectives.

3.1.2.3. Planned study methods motivate learners to take charge of their studies and achieve learning outcomes.

Evidence and analysis

From the syllabus provided, there is a good range of study methods employed into the study programme. Additional document provided by the College shows for each semester and module how many ECTS are allocated for each subject. Also, time in hours for face-to-face (including assessment) learning, independent (including e-learning), laboratory, study trip and internship is included. The hours allocated to learning tasks would however have been more helpful.

Of the 2418 hours allocated to learning, 1505 hours will be independent and e-learning. Students selected for the programme would therefore require the ability to learn independently. Study methods can motivate students to take charge of their education and attain the desired learning objectives in a number of ways. Precise, measurable learning objectives definitely encourage students to take responsibility for their education and keep them concentrated on attaining their goals. There is oral and/or written feedback from the lecturer or fellow students in the syllabi. This is essential for students to understand their progress and performance in relation to their learning objectives. This

will enable students to pinpoint problem areas and take the necessary steps to address them. It will also encourage students to reflect on their own learning experiences and to note what went well and what did not. Students will be more capable of taking charge of their education and making the required adjustments. Active learning techniques, such as problem-solving, group discussions, and practical training plus internship, will help learners engage with the material and taking ownership of their education.

The panel concludes that is the planned study methods for the proposed Master's programme at THCC will motivate learners to take charge of their studies and achieve learning outcomes.

3.1.2.4. Appropriate methods and means (incl. the use of digital technologies) are planned for the assessment of learning outcomes; assessment is transparent, objective and supports the development of students.

Evidence and analysis

The assessment methods are selected to support student development over the course of the programme and cover a wide spectrum of assessment methodology, reflecting the content of each subject and the learning outcomes. These include assessment of the knowledge gained as well as the student's ability to show understanding and their ability to evaluate and apply their skills.

The outcomes of the modules in the programme and their conformity with the programme outcomes are in Annex 3 of the SER. There is conformity between the module outcomes and the outcomes of each subject. Some modules in the syllabi lack details about the assessment. It was helpful to receive additional material from the College following the interviews on 11 April 2023 to understand assessments of learning outcomes because there are no exact evaluation criteria created yet for all the subjects according to assessment methods at this stage. Some principles that will be used include:

- a) Each learning outcome of the programme (or module) specifically is not assessed in a direct way, rather indirectly through the assessment of the learning outcomes of each subject.
- b) Evaluation of the outcomes of the subjects is done mostly by non-differentiated assessment method.
- c) Final internship and master thesis are planned to be evaluated by differentiated assessments according to assessment scales used in Estonian Higher Education Regulation (Unified higher education assessment system and the conditions and procedures for awarding diplomas and certificates).
- d) Electronic study information system "Tahvel" will have each learning outcome and corresponding assessment method(s) and criteria and that will be seen in the final syllabi as well.

Although not yet complete, the consolidated list of assessment methods to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes was submitted, and the information in the SER and information collected during the interviews provides evidence that the study programme conforms to requirements. The panel concludes that appropriate methods and means (incl. the use of digital technologies) are planned for the assessment of learning outcomes within the proposed Master's programme at THCC; and that assessment will be transparent, objective and supports the development of students.

3.1.2.5. The content and volume of independent work and practical training (in the case of doctoral studies, implementation of professional activities) support the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme.

Evidence and analysis

Organization of the study process is flexible, taking into account the adult learners who have full-time employment in the health sector. Theoretical studies are mainly conducted in the e-learning environment Harno Moodle with the help of Zoom/Teams. Practical training is conducted in the skills labs and in the competence centre of THCC, as well as in the labs of UT and Tallinn University.

Organization of internship is regulated by the Study Regulations and the Procedure for Practical Training. International Master's students can conduct their internship in their home country. All students are offered internationalization opportunities by the Erasmus+ programme.

Additional material provided by the College about breakdown of volume of work shows that of the total 3120 hours (120 ECTS) allocated to the entire study programme 2418 hours (face-to-face 627 h + 274 h labs face-to-face; independent work incl e-learning 1505 h; 12 h study trip) would be 77,5% of the whole programme. Internship is in total 702 hours (22,5% of the whole program), of which independent and face-to-face learning is 282 hours and practice is 420 hours; 40,2% and 59,8% respectively. Thus 77.5% is theoretical and preparatory studies, including laboratories at the school site, and 22.5% is practical training at clinical sites or at the Competence Centre (the premises of the Competence Centre are essentially similar to the work done in a physiotherapist's private practice).

The SER states that the volume of practical specialist subjects (incl. various physiotherapeutic approaches and techniques) and internship is planned to be increased to 25% (30 ECTS). For full understanding of this vision it would be helpful to see subjects not just as volumes in ECTS, but also planned hours.

The panel concludes that the proposed content and volume of independent work and practical training planned for the proposed Master's programme at THCC supports the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme.

3.1.2.6. The academic staff members to be involved have adequate teaching and digital competences in order to support the autonomy of students and ensure adequate and professional supervision.

Evidence and analysis

The academic staff (or teachers) for the proposed programme will involve mainly full-time employees of the Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department of THCC. Six of the teachers already have a doctoral degree and six teachers are currently in the process of completing their doctoral studies. The teachers have also advanced their programme development knowledge in training courses in Estonia, as well as within international training programmes related to their doctoral studies. The teachers also improve their knowledge at partner higher education institutions, mainly within the Erasmus+ or Dora programmes. The curriculum will therefore consist of academic staff who have

comprehensive experience in pedagogical and scientific work. Qualification requirements for teaching staff are provided in the Qualification Requirements for Teaching Staff at THCC (titles of teaching positions, qualification requirements, expected personal features and skills that are based on the election or evaluation for the position).

Teachers will be mentored by the principal lecturer and the professor of the physiotherapy programme who will explain the completeness of the subject, modules and programme, as well as the slot of each topic within the programme.

The evaluation process of teaching staff is regulated by the Conditions and Procedure for Evaluation of Teaching and Research Staff of THCC. The evaluation of all teachers was conducted for the first time in the autumn of 2020. Feedback on teacher performance is provided within the development interview conducted at least once per academic year by the head of department. Support for the performance and development is provided on the basis of the 'Planning the Workload of Teaching Staff' document. Development interviews are based on the competence model for teachers. The head of department and the teacher discuss the teacher's individual goals set for the next academic year, the connection of the goals with the development plan and the action plan of the College, self-evaluation regarding the current academic year, the job description, and the content of workload. The teacher explains his or her goals for five years. As the result of this interview, the training needs are mapped, e.g., training in the specialist field, pedagogical training (incl. the activity regarding learning and teaching methods), training in management, as well as research and development activities.

Teachers have an opportunity to participate in different national and international training courses and improve their knowledge and skills in practice institutions. In addition, various training courses for teachers are annually conducted based on the needs of the department, e.g., training on presentation preparation, simulation-based learning, mentoring and research methodology were carried out in 2022.

Annual review of the physiotherapy curriculum (01.01.2021-31.12.2021) proves the variety of supervision skills that academic staff members have. In addition to teaching, teachers are actively involved in research and provision of various services including promotion of the curriculum, blogs, and webinars. There is an impressive list of research studies carried out or led by teachers, supervised acknowledged graduation theses, publications and presentations.

The information provided in the SER and during the interviews provides evidence that the academic staff are qualified to teach on the proposed programme. The panel concludes that there is sufficient evidence that the processes followed will ensure that prospective academic staff for the proposed Master's programme at THCC are equipped to support autonomy of students during the learning process and will be able provide adequate and professional supervision of students. In addition, the panel concludes that processes are in place to support academic staff in achieving the goals of the study programme through training and regular evaluation.

3.1.2.7. The level and volume of research, development and creative activities of academic staff to be involved is sufficient to provide instruction and supervise academic work by students in the appropriate cycle of higher education.

Evidence and analysis

According to the SER, from 2016 to 2022 the academic staff of the Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department at THCC, have altogether published more than 43 high-level scientific research articles in international journals. Academic staff of the Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department at THCC have published 13 peer-reviewed articles in other international research journals. Annex 2 in SER contains a list of high-level publications from 2016-2022.

The panel concludes that the prospective academic staff body for the proposed Master's programme at THCC are equipped to provide instruction and supervise academic work by students based on their collective level of research experience, and scholarly activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: LEARNING AND TEACHING

From the documentation submitted and interviews with institutional leads, teaching staff and employer and clinical partner representatives, the panel concludes that THCC conforms to all requirements under Section 3.1.2 based on the following reasons:

- The conditions for admission and graduation are clear and transparent and are aligned with the College's study regulations.
- The planned study methods for the proposed programme will motivate learners to take charge of their studies and achieve learning outcomes.
- Appropriate methods and means are planned for the assessment of learning outcomes; and that assessment will be transparent, objective and supports the development of students.
- The proposed content and volume of independent work and practical training supports the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme.
- The processes followed will ensure that academic staff are equipped to support autonomy of students during the learning process and will be able provide adequate and professional supervision of students.
- Processes are in place to support academic staff in achieving the goals of the study programme through training and regular evaluation.
- The proposed academic staff body are equipped to provide instruction and supervise academic work by students based on their collective level of research experience, and scholarly activities.

Strengths

- The proposed academic staff who will be involved in teaching on the Master's programme are qualified and equipped to provide the necessary instruction and support to students.
- Some of the proposed academic staff who will be involved in teaching on the Master's programme are already existing staff teaching on the existing Bachelor' programme which will make implementation of the programme easier.

3.1.3 Organization of studies

3.1.3.1. The organization of studies is unambiguously regulated and information thereof publicly available; it allows to cater for the needs of different learners as well as specificities of the study programme group.

Evidence and analysis

Studies are regulated by study regulations. The regulation is available on THCC website in Estonian, however this document cannot be found on the English website. Neither are other documents related to studies, such as “Procedure for recognition of prior learning and professional experience (RPL)” or „Procedure for Practical Training at Tartu Health Care College“ available on the website.

As evidenced in the syllabus document, a wide range of study methods are integrated into the course, are appropriate for the area of study and caters to the needs of different learners. A number of modules are combined to form three main areas of studies; Basic subjects, Specialist subjects and Research. There is also clear vertical alignment of learning, with students beginning with basic subjects, building to specialist subjects and clinical practice and finally developing research skills to support evidence-based practice.

Organization of the study process is flexible and includes e-learning (via Moodle) and practical training. A wide range of teaching and assessment methods will be employed, aligning to good practice in inclusive teaching and meeting the needs of learners with different learning styles and adult learners. Clinical practice (internship) is integrated within specialist subject modules and will enable the students to translate theoretical and practical skills learning to the clinical environment.

Although the panel concludes that the organization of studies on the proposed Master’s programme at THCC caters to the needs of different learners as well as specificities of the study programme group. Although the documents that regulate studies are available, they are not available in English anywhere on the THCC website. Since this programme is aimed at attracting international students, all required documents should be available in English as well.

3.1.3.2. Practical training (in doctoral studies applied professional activities) is regulated, requirements for the completion of practical training have been laid down and preliminary agreements concluded with organisations offering opportunities for practical training.

Evidence and analysis

Organization of internship is regulated by the Study Regulations and the Procedure for Practical Training. Quality agreements have been signed with all practice institutions. THCC offers training courses to the supervisors of internship in order to ensure high quality of internship supervision. During the meeting with employers who support practical placements, it was evident that there is a high level of support for practical clinical training. Student learning while on practice placements is also supported by teaching staff from THCC.

The programme also has a high level of practical (skills) training conducted in the labs and competence centre of THCC as well as in the labs of the University of Tartu and Tallin University.

It is also clear that international students are able to conduct their internship in their home country, and that all students will be provided with international opportunities through the Erasmus+ programme. The necessary arrangements will be made by the College.

The requirements for completion of practical training are also clearly set down in the document “Internship Institution Supervisor’s Assessment of the Student’s Performance in Practical Training”.

The panel concludes the practical training for the proposed Master’s programme at THCC will be regulated, that requirements for the completion of practical training have been laid down and that preliminary agreements have been concluded with organizations offering opportunities for practical training.

3.1.3.3. The higher education institution has in place rules for academic recognition as well as for recognising prior studies and work experience.

Evidence and analysis

A fair and rigorous procedure for “Recognition of prior learning and professional experience” is in place. Key points in the procedure are:

- An applicant submits an application in the Study Information System.
- The applications are reviewed and evaluated by the committee involving the head of the relevant study department and the teacher in charge of the relevant subject. The committee has the right to involve other experts in the evaluation. In all applications the correspondence is evaluated between previous studies or the knowledge and skills acquired based on professional experience or independent learning and the learning outcomes of the subject(s), module(s) and the curriculum being studied.
- A decision regarding the application is generally made within one month after the submission of an application.

For admission to the Master’s programme, applicants must submit documents certifying their prior education level or equivalent qualification, certifying the completion of entry-to-practice level physiotherapy studies and a proof of English language proficiency.

All documents submitted from institution outside the EU must be verified by the Estonian ENIC/NARIC Centre to ensure that the foreign qualification is recognized.

The panel concludes that the higher education institution has in place rules for academic recognition as well as for recognizing prior studies and work experience.

3.1.3.4. Students have access to counselling (study and career counselling and preferably psychological counselling); measures for monitoring and supporting academic progress of students have been devised.

Evidence and analysis

Study counselling will be provided to the prospective students as is currently provided to all students registered in all programmes at THCC. One study specialist will be available for counselling the students of the Master programme in terms of study organization. Psychological counselling is also available free of charge to the students of THCC. This was also confirmed in the meeting with the academic advisor.

When the programme is underway, there is a plan to create a mentoring system where each Master's level student is mentored by one THCC employee and one senior student.

The panel concludes that there is sufficient evidence that prospective students of the Master's programme at THCC will have access to counselling (study and career counselling and preferably psychological counselling); and that measures for monitoring and supporting academic progress of students have been devised.

3.1.3.5. The higher education institution has devised a plan for fostering international (including virtual) mobility among students enrolled in the study programme group.

Evidence and analysis

The programme will be delivered in English to support international mobility for students and it is envisaged that the programme will be attractive to international students from European and non-European countries. International Master's students can also do internship in their home country which will increase the attractiveness of the programme.

All students will also be offered internationalization opportunities by the Erasmus+ programme.

The panel concludes that THCC has devised a plan for fostering international (including virtual) mobility among students to be enrolled on the programme.

3.1.3.6. The higher education institution implements fair and transparent rules for dealing with complaints.

Evidence and analysis

According to the SER, the College has a fair and transparent procedure for challenging decisions and student complaints. Proceedings of disagreements, proposals, inquiries and challenges related to the organization of studies at the College are generally conducted in written form and students have the right to submit a written appeal to the head of the relevant study department or directly to the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs. The process of challenging decisions are described in the THCC "Study Regulations".

The panel concludes that THCC implements fair and transparent rules for dealing with complaints, etc.

3.1.3.7. Plans are in place for regular internal assessment of study programmes by the higher education institution, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, academic staff).

Evidence and analysis

The team at THCC already has a structure in place for regular internal assessment for quality assurance for existing programmes, which will be replicated for the new programme. This includes a rigorous annual review of the physiotherapy Bachelor programme to support high quality implementation and development of the programme in line with developments in the field of physiotherapy and the action plan of the College. This internal assessment process includes collation and review of the following indicators and feedback:

- Student performance
- Admissions
- Teaching performance and achievements
- Developments in learning and teaching
- Collaboration with professional organizations and collaboration partners
- Assessment processes
- Practical training developments
- Research achievements

A curriculum council (consisting of staff, employers, students and alumni representatives) who will meet twice yearly, will be established upon commencement of the new Master's programme to deploy and oversee this process for quality assurance.

Daily oversight of the programme is led by the Head of Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department in collaboration with teachers and support staff. Team members collaborate closely via monthly team meetings and smaller group meetings on specific topics as required.

The panel concludes that plans are in place for regular internal assessment of study programmes by THCC, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, and academic staff).

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: ORGANISATION OF STUDIES

From the documentation submitted and interviews with Institutional leads, teaching staff and employer and clinical partner representatives, the panel concludes that THCC conforms to all requirements under Section 3.1.3. The programme of studies is well organized and there is a variety of planned teaching and learning methods which will serve to meet the needs of learners with diverse learning needs. Internship is regulated by THCC study regulations and the procedures for practical training are documented. There are plans in place for regular internal assessment that will take into account viewpoints of different stakeholders.

Strengths

- The programme will be delivered in English to attract more international students.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- Although the panel concludes that the organization of studies on the proposed Master's programme at Tartu Health Care College caters to the needs of different learners as well as specificities of the study programme group and the documents that regulate studies are available, they are not available in English anywhere on the College's website. Since this programme is aimed at attracting international students, all required documents should be available for current and potential students in English as well.

CONCLUSIONS AND AGGREGATED ASSESSMENT: QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

From the documentation submitted and interviews with Institutional leads, teaching staff and employer and clinical partner representatives, the panel concludes that THCC conforms to all requirements under Section 3.1 in terms of quality of instructions and based on study programme, teaching and learning and organization of studies. The programme of studies is well organized, there is a variety of planned teaching and learning methods which will serve to meet the needs of learners with diverse learning needs. Internship is regulated by THCC study regulations and the procedures for practical training are documented. There are plans in place for regular internal assessment that will take into account viewpoints of different stakeholders. The proposed academic staff body are also highly qualified and equipped to provide instruction and supervise academic work by students based on their collective level of research experience, and scholarly activities. There is adequate support available for staff to achieve learning outcomes of study programme.

The panel concludes that the organization of studies on the proposed Master's programme at THCC caters to the needs of different learners as well as specificities of the study programme group. Although the documents that regulate studies are available, they are not available in English anywhere on the THCC website.

Strengths

- From the documentation and meetings with institutional leads, teaching staff and employers, it is evident that the programme is planned in line with key advancements in the Estonian Health system.
- It is clear that high levels of stakeholder engagement underpinned the planning of this programme, as evident from survey, engagement with external experts and collaboration with clinical partners.
- The programme will be delivered in English to attract more international students.
- The proposed academic staff who will be involved in teaching on the master's programme are qualified and equipped to provide the necessary instruction and support to students.
- Some of the proposed academic staff who will be involved in teaching on the master's programme, are already teaching on existing Physiotherapy Bachelor's programme and thus the already existing staff will make implementation of the programme easier.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- Although the panel concludes that the organization of studies on the proposed Master's programme at Tartu Health Care College caters to the needs of different learners as well as

specificities of the study programme group and the documents that regulate studies are available, they are not available in English anywhere on the College's website. Since this programme is aimed at attracting international students, all required documents should be available for current and potential students in English as well.

3.2 RESOURCES

3.2.1 Academic staff

3.2.1.1. Requirements for academic staff are based on the Higher Education Standard and further rules put in place by the higher education institution, procedures for the selection and recruitment of staff are fair and transparent.

Evidence and analysis

According to the SER and the interviews, the majority of Master's programme teaching staff will be sourced from the existing Bachelor's programme. There is sufficient evidence provided that the current faculty, drawn from the current Bachelor's degree offered at THCC are familiar with the THCC policies and environment, are highly qualified, have sufficient academic training and pedagogical experience to teach students on Master's level, and have prior university teaching experience at Master's level.

Visiting professors will also be involved in the programme and this practice will increase teaching capacity. In addition, the clinical specialists who will be involved in teaching will be locally and internationally sourced and will be 'specialists at the Master's level' and experts in their field.

With regards to the procedures of selection and recruitment, it is clear, based on the SER, that the procedure is transparent or fair and vacant positions are filled according to the Procedure for Filling Positions of THCC. It is also evident that the college adheres to the requirements as set out by the Estonian Higher Education Standard and THCC and as outlined in the Requirements for Teaching staff at THCC document for recruiting new staff. Qualification requirements as well as job descriptions for each position is clearly defined and considered during the application process, employment and evaluation processes of the position. The election criteria and employment are regulated by the Procedure for Elections of Teaching Staff at THCC. The evaluation process of teaching staff is regulated by the Conditions and Procedure for Evaluation of Teaching and Research Staff of THCC.

The panel concludes that the requirements for academic staff are based on the Higher Education Standards of Estonia and that the selection and recruitment processes of new faculty hires is satisfactory, adheres to the regulations set out by the relevant entities and the College, is fair and transparent.

3.2.1.2. The qualifications of prospective academic staff members meet the requirements laid down in legislation as well as those stemming from the specificities of the study programme group and academic cycle.

Evidence and analysis

The majority of the academic staff for the proposed Master's programme will be sourced from the existing Bachelor's programme at THCC and additional staff will be hired. According to the SER, it is stated that six of the academic staff members have a doctoral degree and six faculty members are currently enrolled in their doctoral studies. Based on the provided CVs of the academic staff, it is also clear that the proposed academic staff body are in general highly qualified and are experts in their respective fields and are capable of teaching the proposed programme content. According to the interviews, it was also mentioned that efforts will be made to include additional 'international' staff to the programme as far as possible, which will bring a global perspective.

The panel concludes that the qualifications of prospective academic staff members for the proposed Master's programme meet the requirements laid down in legislation (namely the Estonian Higher Education Standard and the Qualification Requirements for Teaching staff at THCC).

3.2.1.3. The number of academic staff to be involved in the study programme group is adequate and enables achieving the objectives of the study programmes as well as the learning outcomes.

Evidence and analysis

Currently, according to the SER and supporting documentation provided by THCC, there are eleven (11) faculty members employed by the THCC (9 full-time and 2 part-time), and the plan is to hire two (2) additional faculty to teach on the proposed Master's programme. It was confirmed that there are financial resources to hire additional faculty for the programme. Based on the SER, each of the three modules which form part of the Master's programme, will be led by a teacher who is responsible for the cohesion between the modules and the collaboration of teachers about the content. The document which provides the list of faculty clearly demarcates who will teach which module/subject within a module, and there is sufficient staff for each content area. Some of the duties of the existing staff on the Bachelor's programme who will teach on the Master's programme have already been shifted to others teaching on the Bachelor's programme. According to the interviews conducted, however, the teaching staff take ownership of their work and enable students to achieve the objectives of the study programme as well as the learning outcomes.

In addition, clinical specialists and visiting faculty will be included in the programme which will increase teaching capacity and content expertise.

The panel concludes that the number of academic staff to be involved in the study programme group is adequate and will enable achieving the objectives of the study programmes as well as the learning outcomes.

3.2.1.4. Prospective academic staff members regularly engage in continuing education at institutions of higher education or research from abroad, take part in international research projects and deliver presentations at high level conferences.

Evidence and analysis

According to the SER, relating to the engaging of academic staff in continuing education it states that:

- Teachers have advanced their programme development knowledge in training courses in Estonia as well as within international training programmes related to their doctoral studies.
- Teachers improve their knowledge at partner higher education institutions, mainly within the Erasmus+ or Dora programmes.”

The SER also states that teachers contribute to research and development activities and that they take part in national and international projects. Examples of these projects are:

- Physiotherapy and Domestic Violence – OPEP-DV;
- Clinical Key for Electrical Stimulation in Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation;
- updating the Estonian version and guiding materials of RFK (Ministry of Social Affairs))
- And networks (e.g., European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education). Teachers are actively publishing their research (Annex 2).’ (page 9)’.

The report also states that between 2016 to 2022, the academic staff of the Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Departments published more than 43 high-level scientific research articles and 13 peer-reviewed articles which indicates involvement in research. From the CV’s provided it is clear that the prospective academic staff present at high-level profession-specific conferences locally and internationally.

The panel concludes that the prospective academic staff members regularly engages in continuing education at institutions of higher education or research from abroad, takes part in international research projects and delivers presentations at high level conferences.

3.2.1.5. The higher education institution has plans for creating opportunities for continuing education and personal development (including for topping up digital skills) for academic staff members involved in the study programme group, including for benefitting from international mobility opportunities.

Evidence and analysis

According to the SER, it is planned that improvements to the programme and professional development will be based on regular feedback received by the department. In the interviews, the processes of how feedback will be used were clarified. Development interviews will be conducted at least once per academic year by the Department. Training needs will be mapped according to the outcome of these interviews. Goals will be set by each teacher for the next five years. The evaluation process of teaching staff is regulated by the Conditions and Procedure for Evaluation of Teaching and Research Staff of THCC.

Furthermore, as the College belongs to many international networks, it provides sufficient grounds for providing mobility opportunities to the staff. According to the interview with THCC management,

such mobility opportunities are supported fully by the college. The only concern would be the capacity of faculty to engage in such opportunities if they teach on both the Bachelor's and Master's programme.

The panel is satisfied that the college is well aware of their limitations and is also aware of their capabilities and how they can support their academic staff adequately in terms of professional development. However, the panel recommends that the college and department reconsider hiring additional staff, either on the Bachelor's programme level or the Master's level, to ensure that teaching capacity is increased, and that the use of clinical specialists and visiting faculty is clarified and utilized wisely.

The panel concludes that THCC has plans for creating opportunities for continuing education and personal development (including for topping up digital skills) for academic staff members involved in the study programme group, including for benefitting from international mobility opportunities.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: ACADEMIC STAFF

From the documentation submitted and interviews with institutional leads, teaching staff, the panel concludes that THCC conforms to all requirements under Section 3.2.1 based on the following reasons:

- The selection and recruitment processes of academic staff is satisfactory, adheres to the regulations set out by the relevant entities and the College, and is fair and transparent.
- The qualifications of prospective academic staff members for the proposed Master's programme meet the requirements laid down in legislation (namely the Estonian Higher Education Standards, and the Qualification Requirements for Teaching staff at THCC).
- The number of academic staff to be involved in the study programme group is adequate and will enable achieving the objectives of the study programmes as well as the learning outcomes.
- The prospective academic staff members regularly engages in continuing education at institutions of higher education or research from abroad, takes part in international research projects and delivers presentations at high level conferences.
- THCC has plans for creating opportunities for continuing education and personal development (including for topping up digital skills) for academic staff members involved in the study programme group, including for benefitting from international mobility opportunities.

3.2.2 Learning and teaching environment

3.2.2.1. There are facilities (lecture rooms, labs, seminar rooms, rooms for independent work by students etc.) available for studies and study-related research, development and creative activities; these are adequately furnished and equipped with up-to-date equipment needed for achieving the objectives of the study programmes; or alternatively concrete financing decisions/projects exist in order to meet the extended needs.

Evidence and analysis

According to SER and the short video sent, the following facilities are available at THCC to be used by students and faculty in the proposed programme:

1. Skills labs and laboratories at the College which are modern with high-level equipment. Practical training is conducted in the skills labs and competence centre of THCC as well as in the labs of the University of Tartu and Tallinn University
2. Simulation centre
3. Research labs

Furthermore, the prospective students will have access to rooms for independent work and other facilities deemed necessary for the successful completion of the programme. Since theoretical studies will mainly be conducted in the e-learning environment, Harno Moodle, with the help of Zoom/Teams, 'physical classrooms' are not required specifically for the Master's programme.

Based on the evidence provided to the panel (interviews, SER and a short video prepared by the College), the panel is satisfied and concludes that the facilities provided at THCC for the proposed Master's programme are more than adequately furnished and equipped and contain up-to-date equipment which is needed for achieving all the objectives of the study programme. This observation and conclusion align with the conclusions made at an external institutional accreditation visit which took place in 2019: "Current high-technology simulation training possibilities have been highly evaluated by external experts in 2016 during the evaluation of the health care and medicine study programme groups as well as during the institutional accreditation in 2019." (Self-Evaluation Report, page 11).

3.2.2.2. The making available of up-to-date textbooks; research publications and other study materials as well as providing access to research databases necessary for conducting studies, research, development and creative activities in the study programme group is ensured.

Evidence and analysis

According to the SER, and confirmed in the interviews, the prospective Master's programme students will be allowed to use the services of the University of Tartu Library (and the University of Tartu students can use THCC library), like the current Physiotherapy Bachelor programme students. Therefore, the existing provision of academic resources is well established within THCC and is adequate for the proposed programme.

The THCC has made available many up-to-date textbooks online and also onsite, in the THCC Library. The SER also states that teachers can apply for purchase of new literature sources in the specialist field if they provide justification which greatly benefits the students and the teachers.

According to the SER, the college library will provide students with access to at least the following (not limited to):

1. Electronic catalogues RIXWEB and ESTER,
2. several research databases - access to research articles was widened in 2019, CINAHL Plus with Full Text (including over 770 full-text journals) and Medline Complete (including over 1800 full-text journals) and EBSCO research database,
3. eBook Nursing Collection (including over 600 e-books).

According to the SER and the interviews conducted, the students not only have access to the databases, but they are also encouraged to learn to use them via different subjects in their curriculum.

The panel concludes that THCC's plan to provide students access to up-to-date textbooks; research publications and other study materials as well as providing access to research databases necessary for conducting studies, research, development and creative activities in the study programme group is adequate.

3.2.2.3. State of the art and fit for purpose information and communication technological solutions, including study information system, document management system, online learning environment, have been envisioned in order to support learning and teaching. Digital learning and teaching as well as IT support is available to students and teaching staff.

Evidence and analysis

According to the SER, the Harno Moodle environment (an online learning environment) will be used for the theoretical components of the courses. This will also act as the platform for students and the lecturers to interact with each other, including offering feedback and commenting on the work done. Support is designed by THCC on Harno Moodle for each course and will include the study information, study materials, guidelines for independent learning assignments, e-learning objects, etc. To conduct online studies, BigBlueButton, Zoom or Microsoft Teams will be used. Assistance in creating the virtual environments will be provided to each (visiting) lecturer.

Furthermore, according to the THCC website, information about day-to-day elements are available on the THCC inner web and for all study work related aspects, and can be found and managed in study information system TAHVEL.

According to the SER, IT support is provided for students and teachers by educational technologist and IT specialist. Furthermore, the IT specialist in THCC also conducts information mornings with the latest news and/or developments regarding ICT solutions for conducting studies, which are available for every lecturer in THCC (including the visiting lecturers).

The SER states that the lectures will be recorded, however as confirmed in the interviews, the lecturers will have the autonomy to decide if and how their lectures will be recorded. Should the lectures be recorded, this will allow students to review lecture content after the lecture but will also allow students to work through lecture around their own schedule. This benefits working students and is extremely valuable for the programme and the students.

The panel concludes that the support provided by the college with regards to ICT will be sufficient for the programme to run successfully and that state of the art and fit-for-purpose information and communication technological (ICT) solutions are in place within THCC.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

From the documentation submitted and interviews with Institutional leads, teaching staff and employer and clinical partner representatives, the panel concludes that THCC conforms to all requirements under Section 3.2.2. Overall, the panel is satisfied that the College has processes in place

to provide adequate support to prospective students who enrol in the proposed Master's programme in terms of facilities, ICT support, textbooks, databases etc. The panel is also satisfied that the current facilities available for the proposed Master's programme is adequate to achieve the study programme objectives successfully.

Strengths

- Tartu Health Care College has well-equipped and state of the art facilities providing room and space for conducting high quality programme delivery. The facilities include the necessary tools and other training equipment to deliver the programme well.
- Tartu Health Care College has a well-equipped library and provides students with access to not only their own library but also to the University of Tartu's library, which provides the students with an even wider range of materials and possibilities to conduct high quality studies.

3.2.3 Financial resources

3.2.3.1. The educational institution has adequate funds necessary for conducting high quality studies in the study programme group as well as for the provision of adequate and up-to-date support services and supporting the development of academic staff.

Evidence and analysis

The SER states that the programme has an 'assurance strategy and risk analysis for the College financial resources' available which are described in the 'Strategy for Financial Resources Assurance, Potential Risks and Risk Management Activities at THCC which has been approved by the rectorate resolution'. A long-term financial projection for the provision of high-quality education in the study programme group that takes into account the risks of the activity environment is described in the financial projection of THCC development plan 2021–2025.

The report also states that the 'development of Research and Development activities is one of the priorities in the College development plan 2021–2025, including financing of applied research as one important step.' This will enable the College to raise more funds.

Regarding the programme, according to the report, the College plans to charge a tuition fee of 9000 euros for the whole study period (taking into consideration that the size of the class is 12 to 16 persons per year). The tuition fee will cover the cost of studies and their organization (incl. supervision of internship) and as stated in the interviews, no additional resources are needed for opening the programme from the THCC perspective.

The panel concludes that the THCC conforms to the requirements in terms of raising sufficient funds on a college level needed for the advancement of the study programme group related research and development.

3.2.3.3. Financial reports for the higher education institution or keeper thereof are publicly available. Annual reports for the higher education institution or keeper thereof have undergone financial auditing unless stipulated otherwise in legislation.

Evidence and analysis

According to the SER and supported by the interviews, the following information is available through the following channels:

- The budget process of the College is described in detail in the Procedure for the Implementation of State Budget Resources and Income Received from Economic Activities at Tartu Health Care College.
- The assurance strategy and risk analysis of the College financial resources are described in the Strategy for Financial Resources Assurance, Potential Risks and Risk Management Activities at Tartu Health Care College which has been approved by the rectorate resolution.
- A long-term financial projection for the provision of high-quality education in the study programme group that takes into account the risks of the activity environment is described in the financial projection of THCC development plan 2021–2025.
- Economic activities of the College are provided in annual reports that are available to public on the College website.
- The annual report and the report on budget implementation are adopted by the College council and submitted to the Ministry of Education and Research.
- Economic activities of the College, as well as the use and maintenance of state assets by the College are audited by the Ministry of Education and Research as well as by the State Audit Office.

The panel concludes that the financial reports for THCC are publicly available and that the annual reports have undergone financial auditing unless stipulated otherwise in legislation.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The panel concludes that THCC conforms to all requirements under Section 3.2.3 since it has adequate funds necessary for conducting and delivering a high quality Master’s programme, is able to provide adequate and up-to-date support services, is able to support the development of academic staff, has a clear strategy for raising funds needed for the advancement of the study programme group related research and development and its financial reports are publicly available and audited regularly.

CONCLUSIONS AND AGGREGATED ASSESSMENT: RESOURCES

From the analysis of the documentation submitted and interviews with Institutional leads, teaching staff and employer and clinical partner representatives, the panel concludes that THCC conforms to all requirements under Section 3.2.

Overall, the panel is satisfied that the College has processes in place to provide adequate support to faculty in terms of development, support to prospective students who enrol in the proposed Master’s

programme in terms of facilities, ICT support, textbooks, databases etc. has adequate facilities available for the proposed Master's programme is adequate to achieve the study programme objectives successfully, has clear procedures in place for hiring of new faculty, has adequate funds necessary for conducting and delivering a high quality Master's programme, is able to provide adequate and up-to-date support services, is able to support the development of academic staff, has a clear strategy for raising funds needed for the advancement of the study programme group related research and development and its financial reports are publicly available and audited regularly.

Strengths

- Tartu Health Care College has already well equipped and well-established facilities providing room and space for conducting high quality studies.
- Tartu Health Care College currently has highly qualified teaching staff.

3.3 SUSTAINABILITY

Aggregated assessment: Quality of instruction: conforms to requirements

Aggregated assessment: Resources: conforms to requirements

3.3.1 Further sustainability criteria

3.3.1.1. The higher education institution has a development plan along with an action plan aimed at ensuring the sustainability of high-quality studies in the higher education institution as a whole as well as in the study programme group under assessment. In the case of a brand new higher education institution, a development plan and draft action plan exist.

Evidence and analysis

A development plan, along with an action plan, is provided by the THCC which relates to the strategic objectives of the college for the year 2021 until 2025, which includes development plans for research and development, internationalization, learning and teaching, organization and management, as well as service delivery. The development plan is very detailed and outlines the College's plans clearly. The development plan also clearly highlights the strengths and areas of improvement which need to be addressed. The development plan also includes the impact of the programmes on the external environment. Both the development plan and the action plan are available on the College's website.

The panel concludes that the THCC conforms to the above requirements to ensuring the sustainability of high-quality studies as a whole. It is very clear what the targets are for the THCC and how they plan to achieve these targets on time.

3.3.1.2. When planning studies in the study programme group, the higher education institution has conducted a risk analysis and devised a long-term financial projection, which among other things includes the calculation of a student place, an analysis of risks stemming from the operating environment and planned mitigating measures thereof.

Evidence and analysis

A long-term financial projection for the provision of high-quality education in the study programme group that takes into account the risks of the activity environment is described in the financial projection of THCC development plan 2021–2025. It is also estimated that the average amount of costs related to the College research and development activity is 100 000 euros per year, including about 10% of working hours planned for research and development activities of teaching staff on all curricula/programmes (page 11). However, the programme specific risk analysis and a long-term projection was not available for the panel and therefore, the panel is not convinced that the programme specific calculations for conducting and planning the studies is sufficient. Such long-term projection seems to be at the College level, not at departmental or programme level.

In addition, the existing Masters in Radiography programme at THCC formed a basis for the development of the proposed Master in Physiotherapy programme, and for many aspects of the new programme, the preceding Masters in Radiography programme which is also an international programme, is a good example. However, the current number of students on the programme (6, as can be seen in table 1 in the report) prove to be rather low. Since the physiotherapy programme is not yet launched, the level of interest and numbers of students that will be enrolled on the programme is not yet known and cannot be predicted. Thus, the panel does not have full reassurance whether there will be enough students to have a sustainable programme. It should be mentioned, however, that according to the SER, the competition for student places with tuition fee on the Bachelor's Physiotherapy programme is high, e.g., 4.35 applicants per student place (part-time) in the winter of academic year 2020/21, showing a continuous high interest in physiotherapy education even in case of tuition fees.

THCC receives funds from government based on state activities, etc., and according to the THCC management, the Estonian government is very invested in Higher education, more than they have ever been. It has to however be kept in mind, that the State of Estonia does not provide funding for programmes where the language of tuition is English, and this should be clarified. Nonetheless, a key aspect of sustainability is that the programme will be delivered in English and is targeted at attracting international students. The access to already available facilities at THCC and shared resources will be vital for this programme.

The panel concludes that although a risk analysis is provided for the college, the unique issues that the proposed programme will bring (i.e. tuition-fee based, no funding from Estonian government, risk of drop-outs, etc.), warrants a full risk analysis and long-term projection to be conducted for the proposed programme's financial model to mitigate against losses, unexpected costs, etc. In addition, although the existing Masters in Radiography programme at THCC formed a basis for the development of the proposed Master in Physiotherapy programme, the concerns with the existing programme in terms of sustainability and visibility needs to be considered.

3.3.1.3. The age structure of academic staff to be involved as well as share of young teachers ensures sustainability of instruction provision in the study programme group.

Evidence and analysis

The age distribution of the academic staff shows that approximately 50% of the staff are specialists below the age of 40 and already have sufficient academic training and professional pedagogical experience to teach students on Master's level.

The above indicates that the programme will have a large share of young staff to ensure sustainability of the programme.

The panel concludes that the age structure of academic staff to be involved as well as share of young teachers ensures sustainability of instruction provision in the study programme group.

3.3.1.4. In the case of doctoral studies, sustainability is achieved when doctoral studies in the study programme group are based on well-established fields of research and development within the higher education institution that have successfully undergone evaluation. Supervisors of doctoral theses are actively engaged in research and have supervised successfully defended doctoral theses.

NOT APPLICABLE

CONCLUSIONS AND AGGREGATED ASSESSMENT: SUSTAINABILITY

Overall, the panel is satisfied that the College has processes in place to provide adequate support to faculty in terms of development, support to prospective students who enrol in the proposed Master's programme in terms of facilities, ICT support, textbooks, databases etc. has adequate facilities available for the proposed Master's programme is adequate to achieve the study programme objectives successfully, has clear procedures in place for hiring of new faculty, has adequate funds necessary for conducting and delivering a high quality Master's programme, has access to current qualified academic staff, is able to provide adequate and up-to-date support services, and is able to support the development of academic staff. The proposed programme is well organized and there is a variety of planned teaching and learning methods which will serve to meet the needs of learners with diverse learning needs. Internship for the programme will also be regulated by THCC study regulations and the procedures for practical training are documented. Internationalization of the programme has the potential to increase sustainability. In addition, the proposed programme can also draw experience from the existing Master in health sciences (Radiography) which already exists. The internationalization of the programme speaks to the strategic objectives of the College.

What is, however, lacking is a proper risk analysis and long-term projection for the proposed programme's financial model. A risk analysis and long-term projection is provided for the College but not for this programme and it is tuition-based financial model. In addition, although the existing Masters in Radiography programme at THCC formed a basis for the development of the proposed Master in Physiotherapy programme, there is not yet clarity how many students will actually enrol on

the programme and how the student numbers affect the sustainability and viability of the programme. Therefore, the panel considers that the College complies only partially in terms of sustainability of the programme at this time.

Strengths

- According to the management of the College, it is clear that the distribution of funds across departments and programmes uses a bottom-up approach and is largely based on needs analysis and priority.
- Highly qualified teaching staff, facilities and resources are in place, as well as support systems which will make implementation of programme easier.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- Although a risk analysis and a long-term financial projection is provided for the college, the unique issues that the proposed programme will bring (i.e. tuition-fee based, no funding from Estonian government, risk of drop-outs, etc.), warrants a full risk analysis and long-term projection to be conducted for the proposed programme's financial model to mitigate against losses, unexpected costs, etc. Since the programme is not yet launched, it is also not known how many students will in fact be enrolled. Understanding this will ensure that sustainability of the proposed programme has been ascertained and all avenues which would lead to a reduction in sustainability has been considered.
- Although the existing international Master's programme in Radiography at Tartu Health Care College formed a basis for the development of many aspects of the proposed Master programme in Physiotherapy, the concerns with the existing programme need to be considered. The current student numbers on the Radiography programme (Table 1 in the report), for example, are rather low. Therefore, the panel does not have full assurance at the moment regarding the sustainability of the new proposed physiotherapy programme: there is a concern that the expected and required student numbers may not be reached, considering also the fact that the programme will be tuition-based.