

Decision Regarding Assessment of the Business and Administration Study Programme Group Tallinn University of Technology

10/03/2017

The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at Tallinn University of Technology in seven years

On the basis of subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act, point 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA') and point 41.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', authorised in point 3.7.1 of the above-mentioned EKKA Statutes; the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 12.11.2015 Tallinn University of Technology and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct a quality assessment of the study programme group.
2. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 21.10.2016, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at Tallinn University of Technology and the University of Tartu (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Peter Mason (Chair)	Professor, Bedfordshire University, UK
Joachim Gläser	Professor, SRH University Heidelberg, Germany
Kalevi Kyläheiko	Professor, Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland
Roger Levy	Professor, The London School of Economics and Political Science, UK
Turo Virtanen	Professor, University of Helsinki, Finland
Danute Rasimaviciene	Dean, Vilnius University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania
Margus Kastein	Employers representative, Estonia

3. Tallinn University of Technology submitted the following programmes for evaluation under the Business and Administration study programme group:
 - Business (BA)**
 - International Business Administration (BA)**
 - International Business Administration (MA)**
 - Business Administration (MA)**
 - Management and Marketing (MA)**
 - Finance and Accounting (MA)**
 - Applied Economics (BA)**
 - Applied Economics (MA)**
 - Small Business Management (PROF HE)**
 - Public Administration and Governance (BA)**
 - Public Administration (MA)**
 - Technology Governance (MA)**
 - Office Administration (BA)**
 - Personnel and Development (MA)**
 - Work and Organizational Psychology (MA)**
4. Tallinn University of Technology submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 26.08.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 11.09.2016.
5. An assessment visit was made to Tallinn University of Technology during 22–23.11.2016.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 31.01.2017, EKKA forwarded it to Tallinn University of Technology for its comments on 1.02.2017, and the University delivered its response on 13.02.2017.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 20.02.2017. That assessment report is an integral part of the decision, and is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee's final assessment report along with the University's self-evaluation report to the Council members on 21.02.2017.
9. The Council with 8 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 10.03.2017 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at Tallinn University of Technology.

Assessment at the Level of the Study Programme Group

Strengths

- 1) The programmes of the study programme group are rated highly by students and alumni as well as employers.
- 2) Research plays an important role in the faculties and supports the teaching.
- 3) Teaching staff effectively use various modern teaching and assessment methods (including digital methods).
- 4) Feedback from students, employers and alumni is used for developing study programmes. The programme committees are working well.
- 5) The degree of internationalisation in the study programmes is high.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The decrease in student numbers due to the demographic situation in Estonia, and reducing the high student dropout rates, should both be given special attention when developing future strategies.
- 2) Organisation of studies must take into account the reality that more and more students work full time.
- 3) Preparation of students should take into account not only the needs of Estonia, but also the needs of the global labour market.
- 4) The rationale for merger of the Economics and Social Sciences faculties must be better communicated to the teaching staff and students. Students and teachers should also be involved in discussions when changes are planned.
- 5) Given the merger of two faculties and reorganisation of study programmes, the objectives and learning outcomes of all programmes should be reviewed. Resource development and the effect of new structures and areas of responsibilities on the study programmes should be carefully monitored after the merger has been completed.
- 6) Although the programme committees are working well, study programme development should be more strategic, systematic and better documented.
- 7) The study information system should be improved. According to the students, its structure is illogical and not all course materials are available through the system.
- 8) It should be ensured that a sufficient number of textbooks be available for all courses.
- 9) The idea of using an alternative option for the master's thesis that is needed to graduate the University might be considered, but at the same time the achievement of all learning outcomes must be ensured. In case a master's exam is introduced as an alternative to the master's thesis, it should be determined as to whether all learning outcomes of master degree programmes are then achievable.
- 10) The system of practical trainings must be improved. Students need more assistance from the University with regard to finding practical training places and completing their practical trainings. This applies in particular to international students. Also, employers need to be better informed about the learning outcomes of practical trainings.
- 11) The system of pedagogical skills development for teaching staff, especially for novice teachers, needs to be improved. The University offers a wealth of training opportunities, but teachers should be motivated to make more use of them.
- 12) The content of centrally offered staff development courses should be reviewed, since according to the teaching staff they are not always relevant. Teachers could make more use of peer learning opportunities.
- 13) There should be more opportunities for teaching staff to gain international experience. Staff mobility should be supported financially.
- 14) A formal system should be introduced to record the reasons students drop out, in order to develop an action plan to prevent this.
- 15) It is advisable to create a support system to assist potential students with selecting a specialty.
- 16) Opportunities to use library facilities at the weekend should be improved, especially in view of the interests of students who work full time.

Assessment at the Study Programme Level

BUSINESS (BA); INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (BA and MA); BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MA)

Strengths

- 1) Employers are satisfied with the knowledge and skills of graduates.

- 2) Practical and theoretical elements of the study programmes are well interconnected.
- 3) Practitioners and foreign lecturers participate in programme delivery.
- 4) Teaching staff are motivated and enthusiastic.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Students should be guaranteed opportunities to study at least one foreign language in addition to English. The number of student places in language courses is currently limited.
- 2) Assessment procedures should be linked to the learning outcomes of study programmes, to allow for assessing their achievement by students.
- 3) It is planned to reduce the proportion of classroom teaching and increase that of the students' independent work after merging the two faculties. The effects of this change should be carefully monitored and analysed.
- 4) The workloads of students should be monitored regularly, to ensure that they are in accordance with ECTS credits.
- 5) Teaching staff should collaborate more with each other when developing the courses. This would also help to reduce overlaps between courses.
- 6) A larger number of students should be able to benefit from research done by professors. Professors should do more teaching in the BA programmes.

MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING (MA); FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING (MA); APPLIED ECONOMICS (BA and MA)

Strengths

- 1) The study programmes meet the needs of the labour market and are highly rated by both students and employers.
- 2) Participation in the processes of international professional accreditation is considered to be important in the Finance and Accounting programme. CEEMAN accreditation has already been successfully gained and ACCA accreditation is planned for spring 2017.
- 3) Practitioners are widely used in programme delivery and this is highly valued by students. Employers from PWC, Swedbank and the Bank of Estonia participate in developing the Applied Economics programme. The study programme is also regularly benchmarked against similar programmes in other Nordic universities.
- 4) The study programmes take students' interests into account flexibly, offering both open university and part-time study opportunities.
- 5) Study and writing skills seminars as well as earlier supervision have been introduced in the Applied Economics programme to improve the quality of MA theses. Student feedback is positive regarding these changes.
- 6) A variety of teaching methods is used: theoretical lectures, modelling, simulations, real life case studies, group work, etc.
- 7) Extra career development opportunities have been provided for the teaching staff in the Applied Economics programme – weekly feedback sessions with students, peer review of teaching, and staff exchanges with foreign universities. The percentage of international lecturers in the study programme is large.
- 8) Close collaboration with both academic and non-academic partners exists in the Finance and Accounting and the Applied Economics programmes.
- 9) Competition for student places is strong and students are satisfied with their study programmes.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Students continue to need more assistance in preparing their MA theses so as to successfully complete and defend them.

- 2) The syllabi in marketing should be updated, adding relevant case studies, providing examples of current practices, etc.
- 3) The Management and Marketing programme can currently be completed without taking any courses in marketing. The focus of the study programme should be reviewed and subsequently decided as to whether the title of the programme corresponds to its current content.
- 4) More practical assignments and active learning should be used in the Management and Marketing programme. In this regard the learning outcomes, syllabi and in some cases also teaching methods of the study programme should be reviewed. The study programme should incorporate more mobility opportunities, including for practical trainings. A larger number of foreign lecturers should be used.
- 5) Although employers contribute to programme development, they do not receive any feedback from the University in this regard. This should be changed.
- 6) More diverse opportunities for practical training should be offered to students.
- 7) Students' suggestion to use a single electronic platform for staff-student communication should be considered.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE (BA); PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (MA); TECHNOLOGY GOVERNANCE (MA)

Strengths

- 1) Employers and alumni rate highly the study programmes and their international perspective.
- 2) Teaching methods used are modern, varied and appropriate. Group work and its assessment are widely used. Organisation of studies is flexible.
- 3) Both national and international mobility opportunities are very good.
- 4) According to the students, staff members are helpful and readily available.
- 5) Research by the teaching staff is of high quality. Staff's research also supports their teaching.
- 6) The teaching staff is international and has good age and gender balance. Approximately 40% of the staff came from foreign countries.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The student dropout rate is relatively high in the study programmes. Appropriate measures should be taken to reduce the dropout rates.
- 2) More focus on the quantitative research methods should be considered, as requested by students.
- 3) It is planned to reduce the proportion of classroom teaching and increase that of the students' independent work after merging the two faculties. The effects of this change should be carefully monitored and analysed, taking into consideration, inter alia, students' requests to increase the proportion of classroom teaching.
- 4) When evaluating staff's work performance, their teaching work should be taken into account to a greater extent.
- 5) A larger number of students should be able to benefit from research done by professors. Professors should also teach and supervise students in the BA programmes.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION (BA); PERSONNEL AND DEVELOPMENT (MA); WORK AND ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY (MA)

Strengths

- 1) In the MA programmes, there is close collaboration with professionals in the field, and joint practice focussed research projects are conducted.
- 2) Both active and digital teaching and learning methods are widely used.
- 3) In the Office Administration programme, there is close cooperation with employers, which ensures good synergy between theory and practice.

- 4) Members of the teaching staff in the MA programmes are recognised as the experts in their field in Estonia.
- 5) According to the students, teachers are helpful and very approachable.
- 6) Staff have good international cooperation ties.
- 7) Students are highly motivated and satisfied with the content of their studies as well as with support from the MA programme coordinator.
- 8) Completion rates in these study programmes are above average.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) According to the students and alumni of the Personnel and Development programme, they have insufficient financial knowledge. Elements of budgeting and financial planning should be introduced to the study programme.
- 2) Students should be guaranteed opportunities to study at least one foreign language in addition to English. The number of places in language courses is currently limited.
- 3) In the Office Administration and the Personnel and Development programmes some IT courses need to be updated according to the students.
- 4) Changes related to the study programmes and structural reforms should be better explained to the teaching staff.
- 5) In order to better estimate any needs for staff development, feedback on this matter from students as well as from staff should be taken into account to a greater extent, and the role of annual development interviews should be strengthened.
- 6) Integration of the international students into the University needs further attention. These students also need help finding practical training places.
- 7) The variety of practical training places should be expanded in the Office Administration programme.

SMALL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT (Prof HE; KURESSAARE COLLEGE)

Strengths:

- 1) This is a distance learning programme, thus meeting all the needs of students who are middle-aged and working.
- 2) The study programme takes into account regional aspects of the economy and the local business opportunities.
- 3) Teaching staff view the merger between Kuressaare College and the Maritime Academy of TUT positively and see potential synergies.
- 4) Teaching staff is diverse: teaching is conducted by full-time and part-time teachers, visiting lecturers and practitioners.
- 5) Competition for student places is strong.

Areas for improvements and recommendations

- 1) According to the students, some courses are too easy. The courses should be benchmarked against similar courses at the TUT Faculty of Economics and it should be ensured that their academic levels provides sufficient challenge to students.
- 2) Local practical training places for students are difficult to find.
- 3) A suggestion from students and alumni to strengthen the elements of IT skills and book-keeping in the programme should be considered.
- 4) Communication with students by the part-time teaching staff needs to be improved. According to the students, feedback from visiting lecturers could be faster and more detailed.
- 5) More lecturers from Tallinn should be involved, since finding qualified local teaching staff and practitioners is difficult.

Foreign lecturers are involved in the teaching process to a very limited extent. Local staff's proficiency in the English language needs to be improved.

10. Point 41 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', establishes that the Quality Assessment Council shall approve an assessment report within three months after receipt of the report. The Council shall weigh the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations pointed out in the assessment report, and then shall decide whether to conduct the next quality assessment of that study programme group in seven, five or three years.
11. The Council weighed the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations referred to in point 9 of this document and found that the study programmes, the teaching conducted under these programmes, and development activities regarding teaching and learning conform to the requirements, and, on the basis of point 41.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education',

DECIDED

to approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at Tallinn University of Technology in seven years.

The decision was adopted by 8 votes in favour and 0 against.

The Council decided to highlight the following strengths as good practices:

- The degree of internationalisation in the Business and Administration study programme group at Tallinn University of Technology is remarkably high.
 - Practitioners and international teaching staff, active teaching and learning methods, and peer learning are widely used in the MA programme in Finance and Accounting and BA and MA programmes in Applied Economics. The Finance and Accounting programme participates in international professional accreditation processes.
12. The Bureau of EKKA will coordinate a date for the next quality assessment of the study programme group with Tallinn University of Technology no later than 10.06.2023.
 13. The Council proposes that Tallinn University of Technology will submit an action plan to EKKA with regard to the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the report no later than 10.03.2018.
 14. A person who finds that his or her rights have been violated or his or her freedoms restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding. A judicial challenge to this decision is possible within 30 days after its delivery, by filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

Tõnu Meidla
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council