



HAKA

Estonian Quality
Agency for Education

Assessment Report on Fulfilling the Requirements of
the Secondary Condition of Health Care Study
Programme Group

University of Tartu

2024



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Background and aim of the assessment

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

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

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

The quality assessment of the Health Care study programme group and virtual assessment visit to the University of Tartu (UT) took place on 23.04.2021 and 03.-04.05.2021. HAKA Council for Higher Education decided at its meeting on 16.09.2021 that the next assessment is to take place in seven years if the higher education institution meets certain requirements set by the Council.

The chair of the expert panel was asked to evaluate whether the requirements (secondary condition) set by the Council have been met by the University of Tartu.

The current assessment was conducted by:

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Assessment process

The University of Tartu sent its progress report on the fulfilment of the requirements of the secondary condition to HAKA on 12.09.2023.

The current report is based on the written documents presented by the University of Tartu and the information obtained during the on-line discussion held on 27 November 2023 with the manager of the Nursing Science MSC programme and one of the professors teaching on the programme.

In finalising the assessment report, comments made by the University of Tartu were taken into consideration. The final report was submitted to HAKA on 12.01.2024.

The current report is a public document and made available on HAKA website after HAKA Council for Higher Education has made its decision.

Report on fulfilling the requirements of the secondary condition

At its meeting on 16.09.2021 HAKA Council decided that the next assessment of the Health Care study programme group of the University of Tartu will take place in seven years but set a secondary condition that the university must meet in two years.

The following are the requirements set by the HAKA Council for Higher Education regarding the **Nursing Science MSc study programme** to be met by the University of Tartu, and the expert panel's assessment on the developments the university has made in this regard.

Criterion: There are sufficiently qualified lecturers to achieve the goals and learning outcomes of the study programme and to ensure the quality and sustainability of study activities.

Shortcoming: The study programme financing system of the University of Tartu does not guarantee the sustainability of study programmes with a small number of students, such as Nursing. The sustainability of the study programme needs more support from the University in order to be able to recruit more lecturers and increase the number of students. Currently, there is only one visiting professor with a Doctoral degree working with a 0.25 workload in the Chair of Nursing. The level of a Master's thesis depends on the scientific ability of the supervisor, which is why both supervisors and newly recruited lecturers should have a doctoral degree. This is important in order to increase the research-based nature of teaching and to ensure the necessary number of specialists with a Master's degree in the Estonian labor market.

Assessment: the secondary condition is fully met

Evidence and analysis

The University of Tartu gives an overview of the efforts made to give more support for more quality and sustainability of study activities for the Master in Nursing Science study programme.

The report prepared by the University of Tartu mentions that the Department of Nursing Sciences is part of the Institute of Family Medicine and Public Health "*with the total number of academic staff of 40 persons, 18 of them with PhD. These colleagues have been involved in teaching (subject: "Basics of Research Methodology"), research activities (organization of the orientation days for all nursing science master students), reviewing and evaluation of master's theses (opponent), and PhD supervising (currently 3 students)*".

Furthermore, according to the report of September 2023, the staff has doubled with 1 professor, a junior lecturer, three assistants and four junior research fellows. In total this gives 50% more capacity for teaching and research in comparison with the situation in Spring 2021.

The number of student admissions yearly has increased from 15 in 2021 to 18 (+ 1 external student) in 2023 (according to the student data presented by UT in the separate table)

Appendix of the report gives an overview of the teaching staff members who work in the master's curriculum at the moment. Part 1 of the table gives an overview of the permanent teaching staff

members in Nursing Sciences with 8 academic staff members, in total 6.25 FTE, with 1 PhD visiting professor (0.25 FTE) and 1 junior lecturer (1 FTE) and 4 junior research fellows (3,5 FTE), working on a PhD in Nursing Sciences.

The second part of the table gives an overview of the external and visiting teaching staff members with 14 persons (2 PhD's in medicine; 4 persons acquiring a PhD) responsible for courses with total ECTS responsibility of 61 ECTS points.

During interview with program manager we heard that integration in academic community is realized through more networking:

- Internal networking with other programs in the university
- With international scientific society and integration in international scientific networks
- At national level with invitations to take part in advisory commissions.

The report gives also an overview of continuous education topics followed by the academic staff at Tartu University, in partner universities and with other collaborators, 5 staff members are working on a PhD, including 2 in the final phase, ending studies in 2024.

Improved teaching competencies of staff have been made possible via international projects, with 4 projects finished and 6 on an ongoing basis. A list of qualified experts involved in teaching and supervising (4 international and 4 national) is given in the report of the university.

During the interview it became clear that the program is very needed in society because of shortness in the work field with only 8000 registered nurses for whole country with 19 hospitals.

The highlights of the program are internationalization, evidence-based practice, research-based education, transferable skills, team-based and workplace-based learning and, last but not least, interdisciplinary learning.

Graduates work as teachers, as leaders and managers, as nurses. In particular the role as “change agents“ in the field development is mentioned by the alumni in the surveys the Department of Nursing Science systematically organizes with alumni. Alumni mention also to have higher positions in the field because of their competences, especially transferable skills, leadership skills, research and evidence-based working. At the end of the studies before graduating some students are already employed.

This analysis gives evidence of the high level of education in the Master of Sciences and shows the added value for society of this program.

Conclusion

We have seen evidence that the defined learning outcomes at competence level of the Master in Nursing Sciences has been realised, in particular the “research-based” master. Feedback of graduates shows that there is evidence they are fit for purpose in society, and they work as “social agents” in the workplaces in order to implement the necessary innovations for quality in health care. This is only possible because the staff works constantly on the nexus between teaching, research and services to society.

It can be concluded that the requirement is fully met.

Strengths

- Interdisciplinarity with for example economics and psychology
- Team-based learning and workplace based learning

Opportunities for further improvement

- In the context of the development in sustainability for society, it may be clear that the way forward is fully “transformational teaching and learning”. We are convinced that the potential is in place to do so.
- Take the opportunity to augment the workplace-based learning even more in interdisciplinary settings.

Criterion: The learning process supports academic mobility. During their studies, students study as foreign or visiting students in other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions.

Shortcoming: The level of internationalization in the Nursing Study Programme is low. It is necessary to conduct an international comparative analysis of the learning outcomes of the Nursing Study Programme. This was already recommended in the 2016 assessment. The main focus of the study programme should remain in line with Estonia's needs, but an international component should be added to the subject courses. As very few subjects are taught in English, there are no international students. To increase the level of internationalization, for example, consideration should be given to teaching one semester or module in English. Better use should be made of existing international contacts to enable more students to spend a semester abroad and to increase mobility in both directions.

Assessment: the secondary condition is fully met

Evidence and analysis

UT has developed possibilities for blended learning and short visit mobility events in order to encourage more students to have a short international experience during their studies while in the meantime caring for the balance between work, study and personal/family life. We heard during interview that students are very happy with these possibilities, and some take the opportunity to go for this short mobility programs abroad. Also, internationalization at home is taken into consideration.

UT has reviewed the programme to open more possibilities for foreign students to come and study in Estonia. Four subjects are updated in blended learning form and prepared for teaching in English in 2023. Since 2022 the programme offers online international collaboration days to integrate studying between Estonian and foreign students about Nursing Management. Courses for short term mobility are available mostly in blended learning to encourage students for internationalization. However, despite the efforts there has been only one international student during the last 4 years (from September to December 2023, a student from Germany was taking the course *Patient-centeredness and Clinical Health Promotion* 3 ECTS).

Furthermore, according to the report, UT gives students more possibilities for outgoing projects with

- Western Norway University of Applied Sciences,
- University of Turku
- the project NordPCC. The course contained preliminary groupwork, lectures, seminars, workshops, and networking with students from 6 countries (Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania and Latvia)
- Kaunas University Lithuania

- Avedis Donabedian Research Institute and Radboud University in Nijmegen with 33 students completing courses within the international project Patsafe.

As for academic staff mobility visits, different projects were realised according to the report 2023. The topics show guarantee professional development in innovative directions for teaching and research and for service to society.

- Patsafe
 - Two academic staff members visited Avedis Donabedian Research Institute – Autonomous University of Barcelona for collaboration and further project plans, Spain, April 2022.
 - Two academic staff members conducted a research visit to the Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, May 2022.
- Hybrid curriculum
 - Five academic staff members visited the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences for learning and networking, May 2022.
 - Two academic staff members had presentations on the final conference of the project in Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, June 2022.
- GREAT
 - Three academic staff members were involved in the intensive course “The Design Thinking in Healthcare Innovation” which was held at the University of Turku, Finland, January 2022. Two members involved in lecturing and organizing teaching activities, one member took part in the final symposium.

- NordPCC
 - One academic staff member at the University College Copenhagen, Denmark, August 2022 – teachers meeting for preparing the intensive course “Multicultural approach in PCC and its ethical implications”.
 - One staff member at Kaunas University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania, September 2022 – lecturing and organizing teaching activities in the intensive course “Multicultural approach in PCC and its ethical implications”.
 - One staff member in Stockholm, Sweden, December 2022 – a consortium meeting for preparing an application for the new funding period 8.
 - One staff member at the University College Copenhagen, Denmark, March 2023 – lecturing and organizing teaching activities in the intensive course “Multicultural approach in PCC and its ethical implications”.
 - One staff member at Novia University of Applied Sciences, Finland, August 2023 – a consortium meeting for assessing the intensive course and project as well as making plans for future collaboration.
- SAFEST
 - One staff member was at Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, August 2022, to develop a protocol and literature search strategy for an umbrella review aiming to identify non-clinical specific interventions to improve patient safety in the perioperative care process in adult patients.
 - Three staff members were at the University of Turku, Finland, February 2023 to agree on methodological issues about the umbrella review.
 - Two staff members took part in the hospital self-evaluation launch & training at the Hospital Universitario Fundación Alcorcón, Spain, April 2023.
- Erasmus+ staff mobility and other financing mechanisms:
 - Two academic staff members took part in the 6th Summer School of the Baltic Sea Region Network, Bergen, Norway, in June 2022.
 - Two academic staff members participated in the Empowering Learning Environments in Nursing Education Intensive Programme, University of Turku, Finland, in October 2022.
 - Two academic staff members took part in the 7th Summer School of the Baltic Sea Region Network, Lithuania, in June 2023.
 - One academic staff member took part in the European Academy of Nursing Science Summer School, Norway, in June–July 2023 (ongoing in June 2024 and 2025).
- Enlight Network
 - One academic staff member took part in the ENLIGHT Teaching & Learning Conference 2022 in Germany. The conference included networking, workshops and presentations regarding diversity and inclusion in higher education. The goal was to share, discuss, and celebrate effective and/or innovative teaching practices, co-create in-network educational programs and build collective knowledge.
 - One academic staff member took part in the ENLIGHT University Network European Dialogue event “Digital Innovation in Health & Well-being” at the University of Galway, Ireland, May 2023. The networking event engaged researchers with external stakeholders and each other to share best practices and foster future research and education collaborations.

Conclusion

The staff of the Master in Nursing Sciences has realised a well-balanced implementation for internationalization. Students take the opportunities to go outside with the short stay programs. The university has found ideal solutions. To attract more incoming students the option of an English semester, or even better an English variant of the programme can be taken in consideration as an international master in English, to organise in cooperation with for example 3 partner universities.

The requirement is fully met.

Strength

- Installing internationalization at home and possibilities to go outside for short stay

Opportunity for further improvement

- Only one incoming international student (since 2021) has been involved in the program during the academic year 2023/24. The best way to attract more international students is to consider a program in English with a hybrid structure and as a joint master (or Cotutelle system) with another university. The huge amount of international networks will make it possible to develop an international master with partners of these networks, where students can stay one semester in different universities in the frame of delivering a joint master diploma.