



ESTONIAN QUALITY AGENCY FOR
HIGHER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Report on the
re-assessment of the study
programme group of
Health Care:
Master's programme of
Health Sciences
Tallinn Health Care College

2021

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1. Introduction

Re-assessment of study programme group

In the case the right to provide instruction has been granted for a specified term, EKKA shall, within a specified period, conduct a re-assessment of the study programme group and cycle of higher education.

When an institution applies for the right to provide instruction, it is 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.

EKKA conducts initial assessment and re-assessment using three assessment areas: 1) Quality of instruction, 2) Resources, and 3) Sustainability. The Quality of instruction is divided into three sub-areas: Study programme, Learning and teaching, and Organisation of studies. The area of Resources has also three sub-areas: Academic staff, Learning and teaching environment, and 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 re-assessment, the EKKA 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 re-assessment is carried out in accordance with the document *Guidelines for the initial assessment and re-assessment of study programme groups* approved by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education on 19.05.2020.

The following study programme in the study programme group of Health Care and the second cycle of higher education were submitted for the re-assessment by Tallinn Health Care College:

- **Health Sciences (MSc)**

The re-assessment of the study programme group of Health Care at Tallinn Health Care College was carried out on **30 March 2021**.

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

The expert panel consisted of the following members:

Ruud Heijnen (<i>Chair</i>)	Senior lecturer, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences; Coordinator of international cooperation for the domain Health and Social Work; National and international auditor for health care education (The Netherlands)
Kristina Mikkonen	Professor, Research Unit of Nursing Science and Health Management, University of Oulu (Finland)
Triinu Rõigas	Viljandi Hospital, Chief of Community Services (Estonia)
Kristel Jakobson	Student, Tallinn University; Executive Committee member, European Student Union (Estonia)

Assessment process

The members of the expert panel completed the online re-assessment training organized by EKKA. 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 EKKA. 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.

The assessment visit to Tallinn Health Care College took place during a full day by online meetings, using Zoom, on 30 March 2021. The panel conducted the interviews agreed in the schedule. Since none of the panel members were able to visit the College physically, they got acquainted with the learning environment via virtual tour which can be found on the College's website.

EKKA sent the initial report of the panel to Tallinn Health Care College for comments on 11.05.2021.

The College did not have any clarifications or comments on the initial report.

The panel submitted the final report to EKKA on 25 May 2021.

Statistical data about the Health Sciences MSc programme

Table 1. Admission and admission competition 2018-2020

Year	2018	2019	2020	
Health Sciences				
Competition	5,2	2,9	2,7	Total
Students admitted	60	60	40	160
Intensive nursing	16	18	8	42
Health Nursing	17	15	10	42
Clinical Nursing	14	17	10	41
Mental Health Nursing	13	10	12	35

Source: Self-Evaluation Report

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

EXPERT PANEL'S DECISION:

ASSESSMENT AREA	CONFORMS TO THE REQUIRED STANDARD	PARTIALLY CONFORMS TO THE REQUIRED STANDARD	DOES NOT CONFORM TO THE REQUIRED STANDARD
QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RESOURCES	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUSTAINABILITY	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Strengths

- The Master's degree programme of Health Sciences is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national development plans and analysis. The degree programme is built on health care labor market needs in collaboration with the Estonian Nurses Union.
- The curriculum has adopted nurse specialist competence requirements according to International Council of Nurses regulations in collaboration with the Estonian Nurses Union.

- The College has a new development plan to improve the quality of the programme including highly relevant and important development areas nationally and internationally (including digitalization, internationalization and research).
- The College is specialized in high-tech simulation which is important and innovative for a master's degree programme. External experts participate to strengthen the College's profile in this area.
- The content of practical training is directly linked to the student's development project and its volume supports passing the development project and Master's degree exam. Practical training is connected to students' development projects in hospital, which brings high relevance to labor market and healthcare system development in Estonia.
- During practical training the students are closely linked to the labour market through their projects, which develop their competence in leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, planning necessary resources and finding them, and implementation of project's results into practice.
- The College has invested in building strong and various support systems for students. The College management, programme developers and lecturers all are strongly involved to support students' academic progress and development in their specialty area. For example, Tallinn Health Care College has Ethics Committee which has the role to support learners and lecturers in understanding ethical problems and offers insight into solving them.
- The College is careful in giving support to the staff members in a broad sense. Required competencies are based on national guidelines and regulations and annually evaluated and leading to personal development plans.
- The College accommodates state of the art library for conducting quality studies.
- The College clearly identifies its opportunities and challenges and takes them into account when operating.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College has a Curriculum Council, but in interviews it became evident that students and alumni did not participate in their meetings actively. We recommend that the Council's meetings should be organized in a more periodic and standardized way, so that all members of the Council would be around the same table at the same time discussing developments of the programme. The development process needs to be well documented and transparent by also involving students and alumni participation.
- The degree programme includes practical training; however, it does not focus on providing nurse experts with clinical practice and work with patients, which develops advanced practitioner nurse competence areas. This issue needs to be carefully evaluated and developed to ensure educated nurse experts qualify according to international standards of advanced practitioner nurses.
- The role and responsibilities of the supervisors during practical training need to be clear and in line with the programme. Therefore, the supervision, expected learning outcomes and assessment of the students during clinical practice needs to be further elaborated (i.e., clearly defined and documented) to ensure the high quality of mentoring and achievement of students' learning outcomes.

- International collaboration of the academic staff in research has remained limited. The need to intensify international contacts in order to obtain more insights in international evolutions in the field of health science education and to take the lead in developments and innovations in the Estonian health care system should continue to be addressed, as also mentioned during the initial assessment procedure. The College should actively look for more opportunities for international collaboration in research and specify and manifest its research areas.

3. Analysis of the Health Sciences MSc 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 labour market and advisability analyses) and strives for top quality.

Evidence and analysis:

According to the self-evaluation report and its annexes, the master's programme of Tallinn Health Care College is based on the Development Plan of Tallinn Health Care College and various national development plans. This has been confirmed in the interviews with the College management, stakeholders and programme developers. The curriculum has been developed according to the requirements of the College's development plan and national development plans (e.g., Population Health Development plan 2009-2020; OSKA report 2017 Estonian labor market today and tomorrow: healthcare; Estonian Nursing and Midwifery Development Strategy 2011-2020; Estonian Nursing and Midwifery Development Strategy 2021-2030). The curriculum development team was formed to develop the programme, the team has analyzed and assessed the curriculum according to the conceptual model synthesis based on Schindler et al. (2015) literature review. The curriculum has adopted the competency requirements for nurse specialists according to the rules of the International Council of Nurses and according to the rules of the Estonian Nurses' Association. However, during an interview it became clear that the curriculum has not been benchmarked with international courses yet, but it is in the development stage. In the spring semester of 2021, a comparative analysis of the curricula with advanced practice nursing specialization at master's level in Europe should be carried out in order to intensify international cooperation of lecturers and make specific recommendations to master's students when choosing higher education institutions for studying abroad in Europe, e.g., for a practical training abroad. This is in line with the recommendation to manifest the College's unique profile the society, made during the initial assessment. International comparison and benchmarking should support this development.

Since the degree programme is relatively new, the curriculum is frequently monitored and updated by the team of the College. The College uses a strategic framework of planning, development,

implementation and evaluation of degree programme, which provides structure and regularity. During discussions it became clear that the Curriculum Council for the Master's programme needs to meet on a more regular basis ensuring that all members of the committee (including student representatives and alumni) would be around the same table at the same time to discuss developments.

The College has a new development plan, in which the development areas are clearly identified and relevant to national and international developments (as reported in interviews). The areas include digitalization (including working and learning methods, simulation methods), internationalization, research and development work (including building larger research and development projects by involving students and stakeholders). In addition, the College aims to have intake of other health care professionals in the close future (at the moment the admission requirement is a higher degree in nursing) by further developing other than nurse specialist specializations for the master's programme. New specialization types were not discussed or revealed during the interviews. It is clear from the analysis that Tallinn Health Care College strives for excellence in its Masters' programme.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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

Evidence and analysis:

The master's programme was launched in 2017 in cooperation with the Tartu Health Care College, the Estonian Nurses' Union and labor market stakeholders. According to the self-evaluation report, the College has an independent curriculum council, which works as a curriculum advisory body by involving different target groups (including students, alumni, the employers, lecturers from the health care colleges in Tartu and Tallinn and from the Estonian Nurses Union). The aim of the curriculum council is to make proposals for the development of the curriculum and to evaluate them. The members of the council come from different stakeholders and therefore provide a very broad input for the development of the curriculum.

According to the self-evaluation report and interviews with the College management, employers and students, employees (especially the North-East Medical Centre), students and stakeholders (health care organizations and the National Council) are involved in the quality management of the programme. Students indicated in the interview that they have not been part of the programme's development. Alumni reported in interviews that they were not directly involved in the evaluation and development of the study programme, but that they participated in the evaluation of the postgraduate degree and during their studies in frequent survey evaluations of each course and the progress of teaching.

The criterion partially conforms to the requirements because students and alumni have not been sufficiently involved in programme 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:

According to self-evaluation report the International Council of Nurses (ICN) adopted nurse-specialists' competence requirements in 2020 (International Council of Nursing, 2020), which were further adopted by Estonian Nurses Union (Liivet, 2020). Estonian Nurses Union is in a close collaboration with the College management and master's programme development. Such type of collaboration supports and ensures the relevance of the Master degree programme nationally/internationally and the need for the specializations in the Estonian society. The curriculum corresponds to the mission and aims of the College and the Chair of Nursing, and all valid national and international standards and development trends both in higher education as well as in health sciences, incl. the field of specialized nursing.

According to the self-evaluation report and interview discussions the master students and lecturers take an active part in international applied research and become competent in evidence-based healthcare. The examples of these are: students are taught to retrieve evidence and research from electronic databases, to resolve different cases regarding complex patient care, conducting systematic review and publishing in scientific journals.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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:

According to the self-evaluation report, the learning outcomes are similar and comparable to the learning outcomes at Master's level as described in the Standard of Higher Education. The curriculum corresponds to the requirements set in the Standard for Higher Education. In Appendix 3, all module outcomes are listed and carefully linked to the Higher Education Standards. The outcomes are systematically evaluated and adjusted using the framework of Quality in Higher Education by Schindler et al. (2015). This is appreciated by the accreditation panel. Additional comment from the panel is that curriculum outcomes would benefit from direct use of evidence-based healthcare terminology.

During the interview with alumni, it was reported that the programme met their expectations and requirements for their future work. Alumni learned evidence-based health care approach in patient care, new evidence-based methods and practiced decision-making in complex patient care situations (e.g., dealing with a pandemic crisis). During the interviews, students were unable to clearly explain the competency framework for nurse specialists, which is a high recommendation for educators to discuss the competency framework with students at the earliest stage, so that their final competency profile is clear.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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 content of the study programme supports the acquisition of the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme.

Evidence and analysis:

Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole. The curriculum of the Master of Health Sciences (90 ECTS, 1.5 years) contains a specialty module of 45 ECTS (one out of four specializations can be chosen by a student: clinical nursing, intensive care nursing, health nursing, and mental health nursing) which includes practical training in the amount of 15 ECTS. The programme also contains the module "Development of Profession and Quality Management", which includes a development project (6 ECTS) and a Master's Degree Examination (15 ECTS). The aim of the curriculum is to provide opportunities for deepening knowledge in the health sciences, for readiness for independent and interdisciplinary collaboration, for undertaking research and development and for continuing study at doctoral level (Health Sciences Curriculum, 2019). The College is aiming in changing the exam into Master thesis, which is seen as a positive objective by the expert panel.

During initial assessment the panel recommended to change the name of the curriculum "Health Sciences (Nurse-Specialist)" to "Health Sciences". The title of the programme suggested a broad, inter-professional based programme, whereas the actual design focuses on the Specialization of Nurses on a scientific basis.

The previous panel suggested that the programme calls for a broader profile of graduates and should allow to broaden the admission of the graduates other than nurses (e.g., physiotherapy, occupational therapy, etc.) and thus correspond better with the future needs of the health care system in Estonia. The practical training in the curriculum is organized in cooperation with the labor market integrating cases in practice with research and science in solving clinical problems. However, entry into the master's programme is so far restricted only for candidates with a nursing background, which is a contradictory message compared to the title of the programme. In the spring of 2018, the name of the programme has been changed into "Health Sciences" and also the content of the curriculum has been reviewed, but so far, the admission of other health care professionals has not been implemented. According to discussions with the management, the intake of other health professionals into the programme will be included in the upcoming five-year development plan. The panel welcomes the initiative of the College to introduce a new specialty in the curriculum (Health Care Organization and Management) which enables students from other specialties to enter this master's study.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: STUDY PROGRAMME

The study programme conforms to the required standard.

Strengths

- The Master's degree programme of Tallinn Health Care College is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national development plans and analysis. The degree programme is built on health care labor market needs in collaboration with the Estonian Nurses Union.

- The curriculum has adopted nurse specialist competence requirements according to International Council of Nurses regulations in collaboration with the Estonian Nurses Union.
- The College has a new development plan to improve the quality of the programme including highly relevant and important development areas nationally and internationally (including digitalization, internationalization and research).

Area of concern and recommendations

- The College has a Curriculum Council, but in interviews it became evident that students and alumni did not participate in their meetings actively. We recommend that the Council's meetings should be organized in a more periodic and standardized way, so that all members of the Council would be around the same table at the same time discussing developments of the programme. The development process needs to be well documented and transparent by also involving students and alumni participation.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Although the College is planning admission of other health care and social fields in 2023, the programme has not been opened up for other professions at this point. The College needs to provide opportunities for other health care professionals to be admitted to the programme, since the programme represents health sciences.
- Benchmarking of the programme with similar international degree programmes needs to be conducted to ensure the international standards of advanced nurse specialist competence relevance and qualification.
- Curriculum outcomes would benefit direct usage of evidence-based healthcare terminology to ensure nurse experts competence requirements and their role in health care labour market.
- The nurse specialist competence framework needs to be stronger emphasized to students from the beginning of their study in order to strengthen their role and profiles in health care labour market.

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:

Graduates of the Health Sciences Master's programme are expected to hold positions in Estonia or in the European Union that require the competences of a healthcare specialist. It is possible to continue studying at PhD level. Three initial admissions to the curriculum have been opened for four areas of nurse-specialists. The prerequisite for admission is higher education in the field of nursing or midwifery. The student is obliged to choose one specialty module (clinical nursing, health nursing, intensive care nursing, mental health nursing) with the aim of deepening the knowledge and skills of the corresponding field. According to the self-evaluation report, admission to other health and social fields will begin in 2023, which is considered an essential development area of the study programme. The programme was very popular nationally from the beginning, with admission rates ranging from

60 in 2018 and 2019, and 40 in 2020. During the interview, stakeholders expressed the need for more nurse specialists to be deployed in healthcare organisations.

According to the self-evaluation report, a new admission test (presentation of a conceptual design of a development project) was introduced in the third year so that students admitted to the curriculum would be better prepared to carry out the development project. This test requires preparatory work on the part of the candidate and further saves their time by focusing on the development needs so that they can start the development project right at the beginning of the study.

During the interviews, alumni were asked about their aspirations to study at doctoral level in the near future, to which they responded positively and were aware of such a possibility. All alumni who participated in the interview wished to further develop nursing expertise in their own specialty before embarking on further studies. In studying the self-evaluation report and based on the interviews the panel concluded that the Master's programme supported students' competence development in a sustainable and nationally relevant way for the development of the health care system.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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

Evidence and analysis:

According to the self-evaluation report the College has 34 competent lecturers (Appendix 6). During several interviews it is reported that professionals of corresponding fields are involved in subjects of specialty modules and are aware of their contributive role in achieving study programme's objectives. The College carries responsibility to ensure academic staff competence to educate master students and to be active in achieving the curriculum objectives.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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

Evidence and analysis:

According to the self-evaluation report, contemporary and effective study methods are used in the curriculum. E-learning is used as much as possible, which is also enforced by COVID-19 situation. Problem-based learning is used to challenge students and strengthen their problem-solving skills and critical thinking. According to the interviews, the lectures are recorded on a video and streamed afterwards. Students found that this form of learning enables them to better manage their work and private lives.

Moreover, the College is specialized in high-tech simulation by further using external experts to enhance the College's profile in this area. The College has a visiting lecturer from abroad who is involved in teaching with the aim of developing the methodology and research of simulation studies. According to the observations of the expert panel, it can be said that the study methods motivate students to take charge of their studies and achieve their learning outcomes.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.1.2.4. Appropriate methods are used for the assessment of learning outcomes; assessment is transparent, objective and supports the development of students.

Evidence and analysis:

According to the self-evaluation report, the assessment of learning outcomes is relevant, clear, and supports students' learning and development. The College involves specialists and experts outside the College in students' assessment. Practical training is assessed in collaboration with the traineeship institution. Assessment is based on competencies and is conducted by implemented situation-based question, decision-making testing, patient case resolving and solution testing. During the discussions, the panel has observed that among the people they talked to, the term "competence" was not used and understood commonly.

During COVID situation, students further reported that they have received additional support and flexibility with their learning and assignments. The panel suggests that the degree programme would implement even more flexible online learning method (e.g., MOOC methods) to help their students to conduct their studies according to their own timetables.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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:

According to the self-report evaluation, the content and scope of independent work and practical teaching support the student in achieving the learning outcomes of the curriculum. As independent tasks, different assignments within the subjects are carried out individually or in groups. On average, the volume of independent work takes up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total volume of the subject, which enables the student to better combine work and study and to better plan their schedule. Throughout the study process, the student receives detailed explanations, guidelines and feedback on independent tasks and the achievement of learning outcomes. The content of the practicum is directly linked to the student's development project and its scope supports the achievement of the development project and the master examination. During the interviews with lecturers, students and alumni, it was found that the practical training is linked to the students' projects in the hospital, which has a high relevance for the labor market and the development of healthcare system in Estonia. The stakeholders are highly involved in the students' projects. However, the programme does not focus on providing nursing experts with clinical practice and work with patients, which develops the competence areas of the advanced practitioner nurse. The development of these students' competences should be monitored. The panel recommends the degree programme leadership to review and evaluate this issue together with the Estonian Nurse Association to ensure nurse specialist competence is reached without conducting clinical practice.

The criterion partially conforms to the requirements.

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

Evidence and analysis:

According to the self-evaluation report and information presented about the academic staff, academic staff have experience in teaching at the College and have sufficient teaching competences. The College offers new teachers a mentorship for their first year, which is considered a good practice by the panel. Each module has a head and each subject a responsible lecturer, which ensures the quality and development of the modules of the academic programme. The self-evaluation report states that the head of curriculum, heads of modules and lecturers support students' academic performance, analyze feedback and improvement ideas, create new opportunities for more effective support of student learning and provide them with student-centeredness. This was confirmed during discussions with lecturers, students and alumni. The students confirmed that the lecturers are specialists in their fields and that they are satisfied with their teaching skills and content of the modules. Students claimed that the lecturers integrated collaborative learning methods also digitally. The content of the teaching materials was rated by the students as modern and up-to-date, and the lecturers as professional and competent. The alumni reported that lecturers are very knowledgeable and passionate and that they know how to motivate students. In line with the initial assessment, the panel recommends intensification of the collaboration with Tartu Health Care College and Estonian Universities to increase the availability of experts.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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

Evidence and analysis:

In the self-evaluated report, staff was reported to be active in applied research activities and in publishing. The data about academic staff indicate that academic staff members actively participate in research, development and creative activities. Lecturers lead and participate as members of various teams in sectoral professional applied research, publish the results of the research in scientific journals and participate with presentations in scientific and professional conferences. The overview of research projects conducted at Tallinn Health Care College reveals that research is conducted in collaboration with local hospitals in Tallinn. For example, a vast applied research has been launched with the North Estonia Medical Centre – “Advanced practical nursing care development in the North Estonia Medical Centre 2019-2023”. There are six leading lecturers in the research group that unite teams of four nursing specialities. Altogether, there are at least 15 lecturers and 30 students included in the applied research. Applied research is conducted with the Estonian Family Nurses Association entitled “Activating patients at risk included in treatment management programme in Estonian General Practitioners practices – training intervention for family nurses”. In addition, master students and lecturers take part in international applied research “Appreciative management in countries near

Finland: a review of the management of health care workers in Estonia, Sweden, and Norway". Research and development activities are planned within the working hours of the lecturers and the need for it is overviewed before the beginning of each academic year and during lecturers' development conversations. In addition, a member of the teaching staff has the right to apply for a sabbatical semester once in five years to enhance professional competences or other creative contributions. In the interview with lecturers, it was emphasised that lecturers are provided enough recourses by the College to support their research and connect their research activities to their continuous competence development. The College is actively conducting research. The panel is recommending the College to build even clearer research profiles while focusing on specific research areas. Such type of profiling can strengthen future collaboration with international partners.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: LEARNING AND TEACHING

Learning and teaching conforms to the required standard.

Strengths

- The College is specialized in high-tech simulation which is important and innovative for a master's degree programme. External experts participate to strengthen the College' profile in this area.
- The content of practical training is directly linked to the student's development project and its volume supports passing the development project and Master's degree exam. Practical training is connected to students' projects in hospital, which brings high relevance to labor market and healthcare system development in Estonia.

Area of concern and recommendations

- The degree programme includes practical training; however, it does not focus on providing nurse experts with clinical practice and work with patients, which develops advanced practitioner nurse competence areas. This issue needs to be carefully evaluated and developed to ensure educated nurse experts qualify according to international standards of advanced practitioner nurses.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Although the College is already using innovative educational methods, even more flexible online learning methods are needed to meet the needs of students working and personal life situations, as well as enable students to graduate in time in a most flexible ways (e.g., MOOC methods).
- It is recommended that the College builds a strong collaboration with a potential university providing further doctoral degree in order to ensure that Master's degree programme sufficiently prepares their own students for further studies. The collaboration can further profit building of a doctoral degree of nursing science in Estonia.
- Intensification of the collaboration with Tartu Health Care College and Estonian universities to increase the availability of experts.

3.1.3. Organisation of studies

3.1.3.1. The organisation 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:

The organization of the programme is based on the Academic Regulations and is in line with the students' wishes and possibilities to combine learning and working. The study schedule is adapted for working students. The timetables for the students are planned in cycles and all information is available for the whole academic year. The different parts of the curriculum (modules and subjects) and the theoretical and practical training form an integrated whole. Practical training is an integral part of all the specialization modules of the curriculum and complements and reinforces the theoretical studies in the course of the curriculum. During the interviews of with students and academic staff it became clear that students have to go through the ready-made planned learning cycle and are not given personal study plans. Flexibility, therefore, is very limited. In the self-evaluation report it is explained why the option of part-time study is not necessary according to the employers and to the students. All students report that they try to finalize their study within the time frame of 1.5 years. The recommendation to consider part-time study by the previous expert panel was therefore not further discussed.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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:

General organization of practical training is laid down in Academic Regulations, and new guidelines for the organization of practical training are being developed. Goals and tasks of the practicum in each specialty module is described in a subject programme titled "Practical training". The practical training is intensively linked to the development project. During the practicum, the student applies acquired theoretical knowledge about leadership, inclusion, critical thinking, problem solving, planning necessary resources and finding them, and explaining the need for the development project, its implementation and the presentation of results. Thus, the graduates acquire the required competences.

The qualifications of the supervisor of the practical training are not clearly defined and written down, but they are currently being developed. Interviews have shown that mentors/supervisors of practical training must have a master's degree or a specialization in nursing. Mentors receive mentor training from the College. The role and responsibilities of the supervisors during practical training need to be clear and in line with the programme; therefore, the supervision, expected learning outcomes and assessment of the students during clinical practice needs to be further elaborated.

In the interviews with stakeholders, it was mentioned that local hospital/s holds meetings three times a year to develop the position of a nurse specialist in the health care system, in which the College is strongly involved.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.1.3.3. The higher education institution has in place rules for academic recognition as well as for recognizing prior studies and work experience; these are implemented in the study programme group under assessment.

Evidence and analysis:

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) takes place according to the established criteria. The process is led by an RPL specialist and two curriculum leaders. According to self-evaluation report, the RPL proportion is decreasing in time. RPL is carried out in cooperation with another college, when common courses are organized (e.g., Tartu Health Care College provides teaching on prescription) which can be recognized as a cooperation between the two organizations.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.1.3.4. Students enrolled in the study programme group have access to counselling (study; career and preferably psychological counselling); there are effective measures in place for supporting academic progress of students and preventing premature leaving.

Evidence and analysis:

According to the self-evaluation report, the College offers its students various support services to help them cope better with their studies and work. These services include learning support, psychological and career counselling and study support. In addition, there is a separate guidance service for students with special needs. The panel judges that the guidance is versatile and well organized, which may explain the low student drop-out rate (between 0 and 5%). The support services are easy to find and are well described on the web page of institution. In the interviews, the students were aware of the type of support services offered by the College. The students indicated that in case of an emergency, the help was quick and sufficient. Alumni shared their positive experiences with lecturers, the support system among the students, their personal tutors and support services in case of emergency. One alumnus indicated that more support was needed for project work. The program-manager stated in the interview that the support system is organized in cooperation with heads of modules, lecturers and students. Teachers also work closely with stakeholders to ensure the quality of teaching and a smooth learning process for students.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.1.3.5. Students enrolled in the study programme group participate in international mobility programmes.

Evidence and analysis:

The College seeks to increase international opportunities of education and research in its development plan, but at the same time takes into account the limitations of student mobility. Interviews with students and lecturers revealed that long-term international mobility of students is limited by family and work circumstances. Students and lecturers recognized that short-term international mobility would be used more by students if such opportunities are offered. Some opportunities for internationally organized short courses (such as COHEHRE programmes) and online international activities are used in the College (self-evaluation report). At the moment, due to the COVID situation, virtual mobility is applied (e.g., students are offered to meet other international students). The aim is to provide international experiences for all master's students in the future. In interviews, international experiences were explained in various ways, including inviting an external lecturer, joining an exchange programme, participating in international networks or student meetings, short courses. Internationalization of the curriculum is also pursued, for example, by teaching some courses in English and offering courses with Finnish higher education institutions. The organization has invested in digital systems and digital competences of teachers in order to provide virtual international experiences now and in the near future.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.1.3.6. Fair and transparent rules for dealing with complaints are used in the study programme group.

Evidence and analysis:

According to the self-evaluation report, the College considers it important to communicate with all its members. Both sides strive for a good relationship between the lecturers and the students. The Ethics Committee of Tallinn Health Care College supports students and lecturers in understanding ethical problems and provides insight into how to solve them.

The self-evaluation report and interviews revealed that the College does not tolerate academic fraud, including cheating and plagiarism. Cases of academic fraud are recorded and processed in accordance with Tallinn Health Care College's Procedure for Identifying and Processing Plagiarism in Student Papers. All independent papers are processed by the plagiarism identification programme URKUND.

According to the Academic Regulations a student has the right to make a complaint about a decision or action related to educational activities. A person who believes that his rights have been violated or his freedoms restricted by the administrative act of the Academy has the right to initiate an administrative appeal procedure in which the complaint must be submitted within 30 days in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. The handling of complaints at the College is described in the administrative regulations of the Tallinn Health Care College, and a committee has been formed accordingly.

The curriculum of the Health Sciences is in accordance with the policies of the College, which derive from the development plan of the College and the development plan for the Nursing Chair and the statutes of the Tallinn Health Care College and the statutes of the Nursing Chair. Complaints'

procedure is clearly defined in self-evaluation report. Work organization of the Ethics Committee sets out the principles and fundamentals of the Committee as well as the order for submitting and processing complaints regarding ethical problems. Complaints may be submitted to the Committee by people outside as well as for cases linked to the College. According to Academic Regulations a student has the right to file a justified complaint regarding a decision or act connected to educational activities. Processing the complains at the College is described in Tallinn Health Care College Administrative Regulations, and accordingly a committee is formed in general that solves the complaint in 10 days. If necessary, it will be extended to 30 days.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.1.3.7. Regular internal assessment is conducted in the study programme group, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, academic staff).

Evidence and analysis:

Regular evaluation is conducted, and feedback collected primarily from students and practical training stakeholders. This is done regularly and systematically. In the interviews with students and alumni it was observed that they are satisfied with collaboration and their involvement in the internal assessment process. During the discussion, the stakeholders were satisfied with the active collaboration with the College and they expressed that their recommendations regarding education and future health care experts have been actively implemented (for example their feedback on topics regarding projects' methodology). The College involves stakeholders on regular basis to collect their feedback, at least on once per year meeting basis. According to the self-evaluation report (p 7) curriculum changes about organization of studies are also based on feedback by lecturers in a formal (surveys) and informal way.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: ORGANISATION OF STUDIES

The organisation of studies confirms to the required standard.

Strengths

- During practical training the student is closely linked to the labour market through their projects, which develop their competence in leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, planning necessary resources and finding them, and implementation of project's results into practice.
- The College has invested in building strong and various support systems for students. The College management, programme developers and lecturers all are strongly involved to support students' academic progress and development in their specialty area. For example, Tallinn Health Care College has Ethics Committee has the role to support learners and lecturers in understanding ethical problems and offers insight into solving them.

Area of concern and recommendations

- The role and responsibilities of the supervisors during practical training need to be clear and in line with the programme. Therefore, the supervision, expected learning outcomes and assessment of the students during clinical practice needs to be further elaborated (i.e., clearly defined and documented) to ensure the high quality of mentoring and achievement of students' learning outcomes.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Since the long-term mobility is challenging for students, other international mobility opportunities for students needs to be further developed and enhanced according to their working and personal life situations.
- The curriculum is planned in fixed learning cycles and students are not given personal study plans. The personal study plans for students would be highly recommended, as they provide students with more individual support, flexibility and motivation for learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND AGGREGATED ASSESSMENT: QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

Aggregated assessment of the quality of instruction: conforms to the required standard.

Strengths

- The Master's degree programme of Tallinn Health Care College is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national development plans and analysis. The degree programme is built on health care labor market needs in collaboration with the Estonian Nurses Union.
- The curriculum has adopted nurse specialist competence requirements according to International Council of Nurses regulations in collaboration with the Estonian Nurses Union.
- The College has a new development plan to improve the quality of the programme including highly relevant and important development areas nationally and internationally (including digitalization, internationalization and research).
- The College is specialized in high-tech simulation which is important and innovative for a master's degree programme. External experts participate to strengthen the College' profile in this area.
- The content of practical training is directly linked to the student's development project and its volume supports passing the development project and Master's degree exam. Practical training is connected to students' projects in hospital, which brings high relevance to labour market and healthcare system development in Estonia.
- During practical training the student is closely linked to the labour market through their projects, which develop their competence in leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, planning necessary resources and finding them, and implementation of project's results into practice.
- The College has invested in building strong and various support systems for students. The College management, programme developers and lecturers all are strongly involved to support students' academic progress and development in their specialty area. For example, Tallinn Health Care College has Ethics Committee has the role to support learners and lecturers in understanding ethical problems and offers insight into solving them.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College has a Curriculum Council, but in interviews it became evident that students and alumni did not participate in their meetings actively. We recommend that the Council's meetings should be organized in a more periodic and standardized way, so that all members of the Council would be around the same table at the same time discussing developments of the programme. The development process needs to be well documented and transparent by also involving students and alumni participation.
- The degree programme includes practical training; however, it does not focus on providing nurse experts with clinical practice and work with patients, which develops advanced practitioner nurse competence areas. This issue needs to be carefully evaluated and developed to ensure educated nurse experts qualify according to international standards of advanced practitioner nurses.
- The role and responsibilities of the supervisors during practical training need to be clear and in line with the programme. Therefore, the supervision, expected learning outcomes and assessment of the students during clinical practice needs to be further elaborated (i.e., clearly defined and documented) to ensure the high quality of mentoring and achievement of students' learning outcomes.

Opportunities for further improvement

- The College must offer other healthcare professionals the opportunity to follow this Master's degree in Health Sciences.
- Although innovative educational methods are already being used in the study programme, even more flexible online learning methods are needed to meet the needs of students working and personal life situations as well as enable students to graduate in time in a most flexible way (e.g., MOOC methods).
- The degree programme could benefit from benchmarking with similar international degree programmes to ensure the international standards of advanced nurse specialist competence relevance and qualification.
- Curriculum outcomes would benefit direct usage of evidence-based healthcare terminology to ensure nurse experts competence requirements and their role in health care labour market.
- The nurse specialist competence framework needs to be stronger emphasized to students from the beginning of their study in order to strengthen their role and profiles in health care labour market.
- It is recommended that the College builds a strong collaboration with a potential university providing further doctoral degree in order to ensure that the Master's degree programme sufficiently prepares their own students for further studies. The collaboration can further profit from the building of a doctoral degree of nursing science in Estonia.
- Personal study plans for students would be highly recommended, as they provide students with more individual support, flexibility and motivation for learning.
- Since the long-term mobility is challenging for students, other international mobility opportunities for students need to be further developed and enhanced according to their working and personal life situations.

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.

Evidence and analysis:

According to the self-evaluation report performance results and qualification requirements' compliance with academic staff is evaluated periodically (every third year of employment) through accreditation, which is regulated by "Accreditation Regulations and Conditions for Lecturers, Research Employees and Self-Evaluation of Teachers of Vocational Education Department".

The rules for academic staff applications are set in "Regulations for Application and Selection of Academic Staff and Teachers of Vocational Education Department". According to the panel these regulations are fair and adequate.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.2.1.2. The qualifications of 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:

All lecturers involved in the master's degree programme hold at least a Master's degree. Next to that 8 of them hold a PhD degree. This is according to the panel sufficient and in balance and exceeding the target of the Tallinn HCC Development Plan 2017-2021. The self-evaluation report and Annex 6 clearly show that since the start of the programme, the number of senior lecturers has increased from 10 to 18. In addition, the involvement of international lecturers (as teachers and or as advisors/consultants) has enriched the study process. Thus, the College appears to have succeeded in achieving the required balance according to the qualifications of the academic staff.

The College has based its policy on national regulations and on internal policy documents (e.g., 'The personnel policy of Tallinn HCC' and the "Accreditation Regulations and Conditions for Lecturers, Research Employees and Self-Evaluation of Teachers of Vocational Education Department").

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.2.1.3. The number of regular academic staff 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:

In total, 27 lecturers are involved in the teaching of the master's programme, which equals about 10 full-time equivalents. This number is sufficient, according to all interviews and documentation. According to the self-evaluation report of the College, at the beginning of academic year 2020/2021 the number of lecturers with the employment contract in the Chair of Nursing is 51 (in 2017 it was 43), 34 of them with Master's degree (in addition 1 studying at Master's) and 8 with a PhD, of them associate professor Pirkko Routasalo (PhD, Finland) foreign lecturer (in addition 2 lecturers are completing their PhD, 1 of them a foreign lecturer Attila Lörinz (Hungary, Semmelweis University). Five of eight lecturers having a PhD have acquired it abroad and one is studying abroad. The Rector of the College Ülle Ernits (PhD) is involved in active teaching and a foreign lecturer professor Dickon Weir-Hughes (PhD, Great Britain) teaches under an agency contract. Since curriculum of Health Sciences was opened, there has been an increase in senior lecturers' positions in the chair (2017 - 10 senior lecturers, 2020 – 18 senior lecturers) and in number of associative professors (2017 – 3 associative professors, 2020 5 associative professors).

In the report of the initial assessment there was a concern for sufficiency of staff for supervising the developments plans; in the discussions and in the reports the panel could find no justification for this concern.

To the mind of the panel, the number of academic staff in the study programme group is adequate and enables achieving the objectives of the study programme as well as the learning outcomes.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.2.1.4. 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:

The staff actively participates in research and development, has highly funded projects and publishes regularly. This became apparent in the evaluation interviews with the teaching staff. However, this happens mainly within Estonia.

International collaboration in research is limited at this moment and could be improved. To achieve this, the College could benefit from specifying research profiles which will strengthen their expertise and cooperation in the future. This recommendation is in line with the initial assessment report where it was recommended to intensify international contacts to obtain more insights in international evolutions in the field of health science education, to get more opportunities to take the lead in developments and innovations in your own health care system.

In order to improve qualifications and professional skills, a system of continuous quality of studies has been developed and implemented. This includes compulsory clinical practice for lecturers teaching practical skills; some trainers work in clinical practice and work as part-time lecturers.

The criterion partially conforms to the requirements because international cooperation in research should be intensified.

3.2.1.5. Regular academic staff members have undergone required attestation and/or received regular feedback on their performance; and have been topping up their professional and pedagogical skills.

Evidence and analysis:

Teachers are evaluated once every five years. This is regulated by law; career positions are allocated according to the different professorships. The College supports continuing education for teachers and titles and there is a cooperation with Tallinn University for obtaining a doctorate for teaching staff. The management has established a system for supporting research and development of teachers by providing time and mentoring.

The system for maintaining the personal competence of the staff, especially pedagogical competence, consists of offering various courses for educators. To achieve this, there is a connection with Tallinn University.

Annual development talks of the management with the staff lead to individual personal development strategy plans. Adequate feedback is given to each staff member. This is mentioned in the self-evaluation and confirmed during the interview. The necessary tools are made available upon request. In addition, it is mentioned that new teachers have a mentor to discuss problems.

Importantly, the panel recognised in several interviews that within the team, staff members support each other and that the whole team demonstrates a collaborative spirit.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: ACADEMIC STAFF

The academic staff conforms to the required standard.

Strength

- The College is careful in giving support to the staff members in a broad sense. Required competencies are based on national guidelines and regulations and annually evaluated and leading to personal development plans.

Area of concern and recommendations

- International collaboration of the academic staff in research has remained limited. The need to intensify international contacts in order to obtain more insights in international evolutions in the field of health science education and to take the lead in developments and innovations in the Estonian health care system should continue to be addressed, as also mentioned during the initial assessment procedure. The College should actively look for more opportunities for international collaboration in research and specify and manifest its research areas.

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.

Evidence and analysis:

The College has two buildings to conduct the studies in: Kännu 67 and Lehe 12. In total 9315.7 m² with 29 class and seminar rooms accommodating 1421 students. In addition to that, 382 spots are in place for students to conduct skill lab activities in 39 skill labs. Thus, to the mind of the panel, that is sufficient in correlation with the students that the rooms are able to teach at one time.

The College has recently renewed the learning environment which has led to state-of-the-art facilities for learners, including ICT facilities.

According to the interviews conducted with the students and the virtual tour of the College, the panel is of the opinion that there is enough room for study-related research, development and creative activities for all students and that the rooms are adequately furnished and equipped with up-to-date equipment needed for achieving the objective of the study programme.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.2.2.2. Research, development and creative activities in the study programme group are supported by adequate amount of up-to-date and pertinent textbooks, research publications and other study materials, access to research databases is ensured.

Evidence and analysis:

According to the interviews with the students and the staff, the panel holds the opinion that there is enough information available to succeed in studies. The research, development and creative activities in the study programme are supported by adequate amount of up-to-date and pertinent textbooks, research publications and other study materials, access to research databases is ensured.

It is also worth to highlight is the state of the art of the library that the panel was made aware of.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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 support learning and teaching.

Evidence and analysis:

According to the students and alumni: facilities are adjusted to digitalization and needs of education, the library has open and close spaces for individual work and enough books are available. The alumni emphasized that the College provides more than enough access to all the needed resources for studies.

E-learning facilities are constantly in development, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students report that they are satisfied with all the facilities and happy with the online teaching methods during the pandemic.

Due to the fact that the assessment visit was conducted on-line (due to COVID restrictions) the panel did not pay a visit to the library facilities on the site. However, the College provided a virtual tour of the facilities which confirms the information as given by the students.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

The learning and teaching environment is adequate and conforms to the required standard.

Strength

- The College accommodates state of the art library for conducting quality studies.

3.2.3. Financial resources

3.2.3.1. The educational institution has adequate funds necessary for conducting high quality studies as well as for the provision of adequate and up-to-date support services, for implementing learning and teaching related developments and for supporting the development of academic staff.

Evidence and analysis:

The College states that they have sufficient monetary means for conducting quality studies, to offer valid support services, to develop studies and to support the development of academic staff. It is also evident that the College possesses the necessary funds to further support and develop academic staff, teaching related developments and provide up-to-date support services.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.2.3.2. The higher education institution has sufficient funds for research and development activities related to the study programme.

Evidence and analysis:

The College has indicated in interviews and in its self-reflection that it has sufficient resources for research and development activities related to the study programme. This is also supported by the College's development plan. The College indicates in the SWOT analyses, which is included in the development plan 2017-2021, that one of the weaknesses is the lack of interest from employers to order and fund the studies. However, the research is in line with the College's strategy and collaboration with stakeholders and therefore implies that the employers are addressed.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.2.3.3. The higher education institution has a long-term strategy for ensuring the sustainability of financial resources, including a risk analysis and financial projections. The strategy describes, among others, risks stemming from the operating environment and planned mitigating measures thereof.

Evidence and analysis:

As a state higher education institution, the College's monetary resources are dependent on funding from the Estonian state budget, to which is added the profit from the institution's independent activities with fees.

It appears that the funding of the College is determined on the basis of a degree of a three-year national operating subsidy and that the vocational education was funded on the basis of a national education mandate until 2018, and on an annual operating subsidy since 2019.

The financing of the College follows and is in close contact with the Development Plan. The distribution of the College's financial resources results from the objectives of the College's Development Plan, which forms the basis for the annual budget for each financial year and the forecast for the following four years. The preparation, adoption and amendment of the budget and the monitoring of its implementation are governed by the rules governing the use of the College's budget and resources. Using a careful SWOT analysis, the College clearly identifies its opportunities and challenges.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.2.3.4. 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:

Financial reports for the higher education institution are available publicly on their webpage (<https://www.ttk.ee/et/majandusaasta-aruanne>).

The College is governed by the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia, being thus a subject to regular audits.

Therefore, it is evident that the financial reports for the higher education institution and the keeper thereof are publicly available and regularly audited.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The financial resources conform to the required standard.

Strength

- The College clearly identifies its opportunities and challenges and takes them into account when operating.

Opportunity for further improvement

- Employers and stakeholders in the community (e.g., hospitals) should be addressed to promote interest in funding and facilitating research activities more than it currently is.

CONCLUSIONS AND AGGREGATED ASSESSMENT: RESOURCES

Aggregated assessment of the resources: conforms to the required standard.

Strengths

- The College is careful in giving support to the staff members in a broad sense. Required competencies are based on national guidelines and regulations and annually evaluated and leading to personal development plans.
- The College accommodates state of the art library for conducting quality studies.
- The college clearly identifies its opportunities and challenges and takes them into account when operating.

Area of concern and recommendations

- International collaboration of the academic staff in research has remained limited. The need to intensify international contacts in order to obtain more insights in international evolutions in the field of health science education and to take the lead in developments and innovations in the Estonian health care system should continue to be addressed, as also mentioned during the initial assessment procedure. The College should actively look for more opportunities for international collaboration in research and specify and manifest its research areas.

Opportunity for further improvement

- Employers and stakeholders in the community (e.g., hospitals) should be addressed to promote interest in funding and facilitating research activities more than it currently is.

3.3. SUSTAINABILITY

Aggregated assessment of the quality of instruction: conforms to the required standard.

Aggregated assessment of the resources: conforms to the required standard.

3.3.1. Further sustainability criteria

3.3.1.1. Regular development planning and risk management are on-going in the higher education institution, 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.

Evidence and analysis:

The Academy regularly undertakes risk management planning. It ensures sustainable quality studies in every study structure and curriculum, including health sciences. The financial resources of the

College are adequate to ensure continuous quality studies and sufficient academic staff and young talents to carry out studies, research and creative activities. However, the College is also aware of the financial threats it faces and acts accordingly in reducing risks.

From this it can be concluded that the College ensures the sustainability of high-quality studies in the institution as a whole and in the Master's in Health Sciences.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.3.1.2. Development trends for student admissions, graduations and budgetary resources indicate sustainability of the higher education institution as a whole and the study programme group under assessment.

Evidence and analysis:

Since the Master's programme started, the follow-up of student admissions, graduations and their sustainability has been monitored and reported. For example, in 2018, 60 master's students in health sciences were admitted, of whom 47 graduated and 3 interrupted their studies. For 10 other students, study cycle had to be adjusted to ensure their successful graduation, which is seen as a strength and sustainability of the programme.

There were more candidates at the beginning of the study programme than this year. However, there were not enough staff resources in the College to have as many students as in the first admission year. According to the College, the optimum number of students is 40 (and not 60 as last year) to ensure a high quality of education.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

3.3.1.3. The higher education institution has a long-term financial projection of financial resources needed for conducting high quality studies in the study programme group and sources for the provision thereof, which takes into account risks stemming from the operating environment.

Evidence and analysis:

The College is aware of the risks and has identified them in relation to future activities. It is therefore clear that the College has a long-term financial forecast of the financial resources required to carry out high quality research in the training group. What also supports the financial situation of the College is the fact that the College's research is in line with its strategy and its collaboration with stakeholders.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

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

Evidence and analysis:

The group of staff members is diverse in age. This may be a result of the fact that students are also encouraged to continue as teachers after graduation. According to the self-evaluation of the College,

the average age of the academic staff employed at the curriculum of Health Sciences is 46. The age distribution of academic staff and the proportion of young lecturers ensures the sustainability of studies. Young talents among teachers are constantly observed and already during their studies they lobby for the inclusion of alumni in the future. To ensure consistency, the curriculum of Health Sciences is planning to include their alumni in the teaching process.

The criterion conforms to the requirements.

CONCLUSIONS AND AGGREGATED ASSESSMENT: SUSTAINABILITY

Aggregated assessment of the sustainability of the programme: conforms to the required standard.

Strength

- As the students are encouraged to continue teaching in the College after graduation, it is clear that the College takes the sustainability of teaching staff very seriously.