



Development Plan of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education 2023–2027



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SELF-DEFINITION

Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA) is the leading competence centre in the field of education in Estonia.

We place learners' right to quality education and the trustworthiness of Estonian education at both the national and international level at the core of our activities. As educational institutions bear the main responsibility for the quality of education, it is the role of HAKA to direct educational institutions to advance their internal quality culture. Quality culture means an organisational culture based on shared values and quality agreements that is oriented towards continuous quality improvement. We understand quality as alignment with the continuously changing expectations of internal and external stakeholders in the field of education (educational institutions, learners, employers, the state). We follow the PDCA model of continuous quality improvement (plan, do, check, act) in all our activities.

We offer a platform for all stakeholders in the field of education (learners, teachers, heads of educational institutions, parents, representatives of the educational institution community, the Ministry of Education and Research, and other public sector institutions) to agree on common expectations regarding the quality of education. We develop quality criteria for educational institutions, which allow them to assess for themselves the extent to which they meet the expectations of parties, on the basis of a balanced set of expectations of different stakeholders, the Estonian education strategy, and international trends. Together with our experts and mentors, we can support educational institutions by helping them understand the expectations of different stakeholders, integrate the criteria into their daily activities, and carry out self-assessment. Our role is to provide educational institutions the opportunity to receive such knowledge based and objective feedback on their self-assessment and developments that would empower the educational institution and inspire it to find new development opportunities.

Our activities are guided by Estonian and European development guidelines and agreements in the field of education. We ensure that a competent, objective, and open approach is implemented in carrying out evaluation activities and analyses. All the processes within the organisation are built on the principle of co-creation: we value ongoing mutual learning and the dissemination of acquired know-how in society.

HAKA is registered with the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

MISSION

We empower educational institutions and other stakeholders in advancing the quality of learning and teaching as well as supporting the development of learners.

VISION 2035

HAKA is an acknowledged leader in the area of quality culture in the entire education landscape.

VALUES

EXPERTISE: We have appropriate and up-to-date know-how in the field of quality assurance. We are self-directed learners, engaging continuously and purposefully in the enhancement of our skills and knowledge. Equal treatment, objectivity and an evidence-based approach form the foundation of our activities.

OPENNESS: We are open to change, seek new solutions, and appreciate the diversity of smart alternatives. We tailor the dissemination of our know-how according to the intended purpose and target group.

CO-CREATION: We value mutual learning and shared knowledge generation in collaboration with educational institutions and other stakeholders. We shape a shared understanding of quality culture and the roles of different stakeholders in its development.

SYSTEMATIC APPROACH: We see education as a holistic system and, with our actions, we help to build bridges between different education levels and areas. We follow the principle of continuous improvement (plan, do, check, act) in all our activities. We integrate our objectives and activities into a cohesive whole and measure the effectiveness of our work by its impact.

CORE ACTIVITIES

HAKA implements activities aimed at advancing quality culture in higher education, vocational education, general education, and adult education in accordance with legislation, national development plans, international trends, and national development needs.

HIGHER EDUCATION	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	CONTINUING EDUCATION	GENERAL EDUCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Institutional accreditation✓ Expert assessment of the right to provide instruction in study programme groups✓ Thematic review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Quality assessment of study programme groups✓ Expert assessment of the right to provide instruction in study programme groups	Quality assessment of study programme group in a continuing education institution	Quality assessment of an educational institution (piloting)
DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY AGREEMENTS, CRITERIA AND GUIDANCE MATERIALS			
TRAINING, SEMINARS, ASSESSMENT			
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES			

HAKA OBJECTIVES FOR 2023–2027

The objectives of HAKA have been defined for main stakeholders and are relevant for all education types.

1. Educational institutions

HAKA's support for advancing the quality culture of educational institutions is inspiring, effective, and efficient.

Key indicators: Feedback from educational institutions on the training and guidance materials of HAKA, the work of assessment experts and mentors, and the quality of assessment reports is consistently positive or has an upward trend. Analyses show that HAKA's support and its impact on the advancement of quality culture is highly valued by educational institutions.

2. Experts

HAKA has a continuously expanding expert pool that supports educational institutions in enhancing their quality of teaching and learning.

Key indicators: The expert pool of HAKA grows by at least 20 new experts each year. Feedback from educational institutions on the quality of work of experts is consistently positive or has an upward trend.

3. Learners

Learners' awareness of quality and their involvement in HAKA's activities have increased.

Key indicators: A quality network of learners has been developed, combining and reinforcing the expectations of learners and students in primary and secondary schools and vocational educational institutions as well as higher education institutions with regard to the quality of education. The number of learners participating in HAKA's development activities is increasing.

4. Partners

HAKA is a trustworthy and beneficial partner to all stakeholders in the field of education.

Key indicators: The analyses carried out by HAKA serve as input for planning changes and initiating legislation. Partner satisfaction with HAKA's activities is high.

5. International community

HAKA is the importer of best international practice in advancing the quality culture of educational institutions and contributes to the development of the quality of education in other countries with its know-how.

Key indicators: The impact of assessments and projects on the development of quality culture in Estonia and abroad is noticeable based on the feedback from assessed institutions, project partners, and Estonian participants. Basis: analytical summaries of project activities, feedback from assessed institutions, feedback from participants on the expertise of the international experts involved by HAKA.

Development objective of HAKA as an organisation

The governance, work organisation, and shared values of the organisation create the necessary preconditions for achieving the objectives of HAKA.

- 1) The planning of HAKA's activities is resource-efficient and flexible.
Key indicator: A user-friendly and resource-efficient digital working environment has been developed. HAKA demonstrates exceptional capability in managing uncertainties: all tasks are completed on time and to a high standard.
- 2) HAKA has a sufficient number of competent and motivated staff members to achieve the objectives of the development plan.
Key indicator: Feedback from educational institutions and other partners on the competence of HAKA staff is consistently positive or improving. Basis: Educational institution and partner survey conducted in 2024 and 2026
- 3) HAKA's funds are sufficient to ensure the quality of its core activities as well as their continuous improvement.
Key indicator: The funding allocated for development activities and the professional development of staff is marked by a stable or growing trend.
- 4) Quality culture is uniformly understood, valued and followed by all HAKA staff members.
Key indicator: Individual analyses prepared in the framework of collaboration interviews on the implementation of a value-based approach.

ANNEXES TO THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ANNEX 1. SECTORAL FOCUS AREAS IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES 2023–2027

ANNEX 2. ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OF HAKA

ANNEX 3. HAKA SWOT 2022

ANNEX 1. SECTORAL FOCUS AREAS IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES 2023–2027

1. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (higher education institutions, vocational educational institutions, continuing education institutions, general education schools) HAKA's work in promoting the quality culture of educational institutions is inspiring, effective, and efficient.				
	HIGHER EDUCATION	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	CONTINUING EDUCATION	GENERAL EDUCATION
FOCUS AREAS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increasing the self-assessment capacity of educational institutions through training, guidance, development seminars, peer learning, and dissemination of international practice, with a strong emphasis on learning and teaching as well as supporting learner development. 2) Implementation of a needs-based (targeted and resource-efficient) approach in the development of institutional accreditation principles and guidelines. 3) Harnessing the potential of thematic reviews and analyses; thematic reviews and analyses are based on the perceived needs of educational institutions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increasing the self-assessment capacity of educational institutions through training, guidance, development seminars, peer learning, and dissemination of international practice, with a strong emphasis on learning and teaching as well as supporting learner development. 2) Development of the principles and guidelines for the new quality assessment model of vocational education and training. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Enhancing the self-assessment capacity of educational institutions through training, guidance, development seminars, peer learning, and dissemination of international practice, with a strong emphasis on learning and teaching as well as supporting learner development. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Development and piloting of a quality system for primary and secondary schools, including quality criteria and a quality assessment model. 2) Provision of needs-based development programmes for educational institutions in co-operation with universities. 3) Supporting the take-up of digital dashboards by general education schools and their keepers to strengthen evidence-based management practices and self-assessment capacities. 4) Provision of training and development seminars and the preparation of guidance materials to enhance the self-assessment capacities of educational institutions.

<p>ACTIVITY INDICATORS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ New assessment models have been developed and piloted. ✓ Interactive guidance materials / learning objects have been developed and seminars have been organised to support self-assessment and the preparation of reports. ✓ The number of thematic reviews and analyses, including those at the request of higher education institutions. (higher education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interactive guidance materials / learning objects have been developed for self-assessment and the preparation of reports. ✓ At least two outreach events have been organised for institutions per calendar year. ✓ The number of views of guidelines, videos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A new quality system for general education has been developed and piloted together with quality criteria and an assessment model. ✓ The number of schools participating in quality assessment is at least 35 by the end of the development plan period. ✓ The number of people that participated in activities supporting self-assessment capabilities. ✓ The number of permanent users of the digital dashboard (organisation + individual) is growing continuously.
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<p>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from educational institutions on HAKA's self-assessment seminars, training, and guidance materials shows a strong satisfaction with the support provided by HAKA. ➤ An analysis of feedback and results from educational institutions confirms that the new assessment models take the needs of educational institutions into consideration, are resource-efficient, and support the development of quality culture in educational institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from educational institutions on HAKA's self-assessment seminars, training, and guidance materials shows a strong satisfaction with the support provided by HAKA. ➤ The quality of self-assessments of the institution has increased judging by the feedback provided by experts and coordinators (we include feedback in the expert's survey and a column in the coordinators' work spreadsheet to see whether it was provided or not). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Analysis of the feedback and results received from the educational institutions that participated in the assessment pilot shows that the new general education quality system takes the needs of the educational institutions into account and supports the development of quality culture in educational institutions. ➤ Feedback from educational institutions on the support provided by HAKA for self-assessment is consistently positive or improving. ➤ Feedback from the users of the digital desktop is consistently positive or improving. ➤ The self-assessment and change management capacity of schools that participated in the assessment pilot and development programmes has increased.
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2. EXPERTS (assessment experts and mentors) HAKA has a continuously expanding and motivated expert pool that contributes to enhancing the quality of studies in educational institutions.				
	HIGHER EDUCATION	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	CONTINUING EDUCATION	GENERAL EDUCATION
FOCUS AREAS	1) A well-designed recruitment process ensures the involvement of a sufficient number of competent and motivated experts who carry the values of HAKA in assessments. 2) The learning and development opportunities of experts support the principles of student-centred formative assessment as well as assessment reports with a high and uniform level of quality. 3) Broader involvement of Estonian academic experts in assessment committees to promote quality awareness in higher education institutions. (higher education)		1) A well-designed and needs-based recruitment process ensures the involvement of a sufficient number of competent experts carrying the values of HAKA in all study programme groups. 2) The involvement of experienced experts who specialise in formative assessment and student-centred learning in assessment committees to support new experts. 3) The training of continuing education experts is effective.	1) Activities are supported by a sufficient number of assessment experts and mentors specialised in the area. 2) Necessary support is provided to mentors and assessment experts in the development of their competences. Their preparedness to contribute to the promotion of the quality of general education is high.
ACTIVITY INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interactive guidelines for experts have been prepared. ✓ Number of expert seminar training sessions and seminars organised by HAKA, number of trained experts. ✓ Number of new experts involved in assessment. ✓ Number of Estonian academic experts involved in assessment. (higher education) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regular training of experts – at least two trainings per year. ✓ Number of trained experts. ✓ Number of experienced experts involved in training. ✓ Number of experts in a study programme group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Around 70% of the selected experts/mentors are recurrently used experts/mentors. ✓ There are (interactive) guidance materials for assessment experts and training programmes in place.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from educational institutions on the professionalism of experts and the appropriateness of development recommendations in assessment reports is very positive. ➤ Feedback from experts on the professionalism of the support provided by HAKA coordinators (empowerment of experts) is very positive. ➤ Coordinators consider the contribution and expertise of experts to be of a high level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A call for qualified candidates to fill the position of an assessment committee member. ➤ Feedback from institutions / other experts / HAKA coordinators on the quality of the work of experts. ➤ Feedback from experts on the professionalism of the support provided by HAKA coordinators is very positive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Primary and secondary schools and their managers are very satisfied with mentors and experts. ➤ Experts and mentors are very satisfied with the support provided by HAKA.
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3. LEARNERS

Learners' awareness of quality and their involvement in HAKA's activities have increased.

	HIGHER EDUCATION	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	CONTINUING EDUCATION	GENERAL EDUCATION
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FOCUS AREAS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Organisation of training/seminars/workshops to raise learners' awareness of quality and prepare them for the role of an assessment expert. 2) The participation of students in assessment committees and the adoption of accreditation decisions is more effective as a result of greater representation of students in assessment committees, the Assessment Council, and in the development of procedures. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Organisation of training/seminars/workshops to raise learners' awareness of quality and prepare them for the role of an assessment expert. 2) Both learners and alumni are involved in assessments in the piloting and implementation of the new model of quality assessment. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Informing learners and contracting entities about how to choose appropriate and high-quality continuing education. 2) The interests of learners / contracting entities are represented in the quality assessment of continuing education. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Principles that support the substantive involvement of students in the planning and implementation of the development activities of general education schools and in quality assessment have been developed and implemented. 2) Student unions are involved in the development process of quality criteria and the pilot project. 3) A student-centred approach is applied to both the quality criteria and the evaluation of the results of assessment programmes.
ACTIVITY INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ At least one seminar is organised for learners each year. Number of participants. ✓ Number of Estonian students in foreign assessments. ✓ Number of students involved in the HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education (at least 2). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ At least one seminar is organised for learners each year. Number of participants. ✓ Number of learners/alumni in assessment committees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implementation of a mini-campaign (video, blog, op-ed) as part of which we give guidance to learners on how to choose training. ✓ Participation of the learners' representative in the Quality Assessment Council for Continuing Education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In all schools participating in the assessment pilot, students are equal partners in the planning and implementation of development activities as well as in providing feedback. ✓ Number of student representatives involved in the development of quality criteria and the assessment model. ✓ An assessment tool that measures growth in student awareness of quality in pilot schools.

<p>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from learners on the training, seminars, and workshops organised by HAKA is consistently positive or improving. ➤ In assessment committees and the Assessment Council, feedback on students' performance is very positive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from learners on the training, seminars, and workshops organised by HAKA is consistently positive or improving. ➤ In the new assessment model, each assessment committee includes at least one vocational training student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from learners supports the promotion of quality culture in continuing education institutions; assessments show whether and how the institution takes learners' feedback into account. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from learners in schools that participated in the quality assessment pilot confirms the growth of student awareness of quality.
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4. PARTNERS (Ministry of Education and Research (MER), Estonian Vocational Education Promotion Association (EAAVE), Estonian School Heads Association, Federation of Estonian Student Unions, Estonian Teachers Association, representative organisations of employers, professional associations, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities (AECM), local governments, Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras (AEAE Andras), Estonian Qualifications Authority, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund):
HAKA is a reliable and beneficial partner to all stakeholders in the field of education.

	HIGHER EDUCATION MER, representative organisations of employers, Federation of Estonian Student Unions	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION Federation of Estonian Student Unions, EAAVE, MER, Estonian Qualifications Authority, Estonian Employers' Confederation, professional associations	CONTINUING EDUCATION MER, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, EPALE, AEAE Andras, EAAVE, Estonian Qualifications Authority, Estonian Employers' Confederation	GENERAL EDUCATION Including MER, Estonian School Heads Association, Federation of Estonian Student Unions, AECM
FOCUS AREAS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) HAKA initiates and conducts analyses on topics relevant to its partners, which serve as input for planning changes and initiating activities, including in legislation and development strategies. (MER) 2) Adoption of a more systematic approach to co-operation with representative organisations of employers. (higher education) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) HAKA initiates and conducts analyses on topics relevant to its partners, which serve as input for planning changes and initiating activities, including in legislation and development strategies. (MER) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) We purposefully share with our partners the analyses we have conducted which serve as input for planning changes and initiating activities, including in legislation and development strategies. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Key partners have been determined. 2) Systematic activities have been developed and implemented to establish trusting partnerships.

ACTIVITY INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Number of seminars held to introduce the analyses conducted. ✓ Action plan(s), memoranda, co-operation agreements, etc with representative organisations of employers. (higher education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Number of analyses ✓ Number of outreach events where we present to our partners the analyses conducted by HAKA, depending on the needs of the target group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A communication plan for partnerships has been prepared and implemented.
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from partners highlights the usefulness of HAKA's analyses. ➤ Partner satisfaction with HAKA's activities is high. ➤ The impact of HAKA in legislation, development plans and strategies is apparent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The analyses carried out by HAKA serve as input for planning changes, initiating activities, and legislation. ➤ Partner satisfaction with HAKA's activities is high. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Partners are continuously involved in the development of general education. ➤ HAKA is increasingly more engaged in the (development) activities and discussions initiated by partners. ➤ The impact of HAKA's activities in legislation and national action plans is apparent.

5. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

HAKA is the importer of the best international practice in promoting the quality culture of educational institutions and contributes to the development of the quality of education in other countries with its know-how.

	HIGHER EDUCATION	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	CONTINUING EDUCATION	GENERAL EDUCATION
FOCUS AREAS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cross-border assessments and projects that involve both HAKA staff and experts from Estonia are mutually beneficial, support the advancement of quality culture abroad, and provide input for internal developments in Estonia. 2) Enhancing the international visibility of HAKA in international networks and among higher education institutions abroad (in selected countries). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Creating international assessment opportunities for Estonian vocational schools and assessment experts through EQAVET Peer Review. 2) Assessment of the complete quality assurance system of vocational training in Estonia (EQAVET Peer Review at System Level). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Sharing experience and learning from others about the assessment of continuing education. 2) We participate in international events focusing on the quality assessment of continuing education. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mapping of agencies, institutions and information-sharing platforms engaged in the advancement of quality in general education. Establishing contacts to learn from each other, share experiences, and discover best practices. 2) Sharing the experience of Estonia in relevant international co-operation networks, newsletters and other such platforms.
ACTIVITY INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ At least two articles in the newsletters of international networks per year. ✓ A cross-border assessment service, including a marketing plan, has been developed. ✓ HAKA has at least one development project per year (preferably twinning). ✓ A minimum of two cross-border assessments per year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Number of participations/presentations by schools and experts in EQAVET experience sharing seminars. ✓ At the initiative of HAKA as an EQAVET NRP, the complete quality assurance system of Estonian vocational training has undergone EQAVET Peer Review at System Level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Number of participations in international event(s). ✓ Visits of HAKA staff to other quality agencies for the exchange and analysis of best practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ At least one study visit per calendar year, participation in at least one international seminar/event focusing on the quality of general education. ✓ Hosting of at least two study visits per year from 2025.

<p>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</p>	<p>➤ The impact of assessments and projects on the development of quality culture in Estonia and abroad is noticeable based on the feedback from the assessed project partners and Estonian participants.</p>	<p>➤ Schools that participated in international assessment are very satisfied with their experience and the support provided by HAKA.</p>	<p>➤ HAKA is internationally recognised as a promoter of quality in continuing education, including micro-credential studies (the number of presentations and external delegations to increase from 2024).</p>	<p>➤ HAKA is internationally recognised as a developer of quality criteria for primary and secondary schools and as a promoter of quality culture (*number of international presentations, articles starting from 2025).</p>
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ANNEX 2. ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OF HAKA

Activity indicators:

- Number of HAKA staff members
- Number of / number of participants in expert training/seminars
 - o Higher education
 - o Vocational education
 - o Continuing education
 - o General education
- Number of quality assessment (accreditation decisions)
 - o Continuing education
 - Quality assessment of the study programme groups of the training card partners of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund
 - Quality assessment of a study programme group (Adult Education Act)
 - o Vocational education
 - Quality assessment of vocational training
 - Initial assessment and re-assessment of a study programme group in vocational education
 - o Higher education
 - Institutional accreditation
 - Quality assessment of study programme groups
 - Initial and re-assessments
 - o General education
 - Number of educational institutions that participated in the assessment pilot
- Number of experts (incl mentors), including learners
 - o Higher education – experts/students
 - o Vocational education – experts/students
 - o Continuing education – experts/learners
 - o General education – experts/pupils
- Number of learners that participated in the development activities of HAKA
 - o Higher education
 - o Vocational education
 - o Continuing education
 - o General education
- Number of self-assessment training sessions/seminars for educational institutions and the number of participants
 - o Higher education – number of training sessions / number of participants
 - o Vocational education – number of training sessions / number of participants

- Continuing education – number of training sessions / number of participants
 - General education – number of training sessions / number of participants
- Number of analyses carried out by HAKA
 - Higher education
 - Vocational education
 - Continuing education
 - General education

Overall performance indicators:

- Educational institutions' feedback on assessment (updating of questionnaires in 2023, new questionnaires from 2024)
 - o Higher education
 - o Vocational education
 - o Continuing education
 - o General education
- Feedback on self-assessment training and guidelines for educational institutions – regular (updating of questionnaires in 2023)
 - o Higher education
 - o Vocational education
 - o Continuing education
 - o General education
- Experts' (incl mentors') feedback to HAKA (incl guidelines) – regular (updating of questionnaires in 2023)
 - o Higher education
 - o Vocational education
 - o Continuing education
 - o General education
- Learners' feedback to HAKA (different events) – regular
 - o Higher education
 - o Vocational education
 - o Continuing education
 - o General education
- Partners' feedback to HAKA (questionnaires under development, planned for 2024 and 2026)
 - o Higher education
 - o Vocational education
 - o Continuing education
 - o General education
- Impact assessment of HAKA's activities (qualitative, twice during development plan period)
 - o Higher education
 - o Vocational education
 - o Continuing education
 - o General education

ANNEX 3. HAKA SWOT1 2022

STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HAKA’S UNIQUE ROLE in advancing the quality of education in Estonia Competence Centre for quality assessment, development activities on the quality of education, international co-operation. ▪ HAKA’S PROFESSIONAL AND CONTINUOUSLY DEVELOPING TEAM An experienced team comprising members of different ages, backgrounds, and competencies, including staff members with PhDs. Upon changes in duties, staff members have the opportunity and ability to retrain and enter a new field. ▪ PROFESSIONAL EXPERTS The training of experts involves practical exercises; we ensure the continuous renewal of our expert pool, strict selection criteria; educational institutions consistently rate the experts highly. ▪ HAKA AS A CO-CREATION PLATFORM We involve different parties in our activities and offer both learning and development opportunities (training, seminars, etc). ▪ INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS in the field of higher and vocational education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HAKA supports raising students’ awareness of quality; quality network activities. - Students’ participation in assessment councils, committees, trainings increases continuously. ▪ INVOLVEMENT OF EMPLOYERS IN ALL ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active participation of employers in all assessment committees. - Substantive co-operation with professional and representative organisations, roundtables (especially in vocational education).
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¹ The analysis is based on the following definitions of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and risks:

Strengths mean proven internal factors that support the achievement of the objectives of our organisation.

Weaknesses mean proven internal factors (processes, resources) that hinder the achievement of the objectives of our organisation.

Opportunities mean both internal and external factors that would facilitate the achievement of the objectives of our organisation in the event of materialisation.

Threats mean both internal and external factors that would hinder the achievement of the objectives of our organisation in the event of materialisation.

Our organisation = HAKA + assessment councils + assessment experts and all the activities we conduct

■ **QUALITY ASSESSMENT AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL FOR ASSESSED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

The suggestions for improvement made by assessment committees facilitate dialogue between employers and educational institutions, the discipline- and trade-specific development recommendations that reflect the development needs of the sector are highly valued. The recommendations outlined in HAKA's assessments serve as a catalyst for improvement activities undertaken by educational institutions, assessment reports serve as management tools for school heads.

■ **FLEXIBILITY OF ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**

Assessment procedures allow for the context and development needs of educational institutions to be taken into consideration, joint assessments of higher and vocational education, sampling of study programmes for institutional accreditation, and the combining of study programme groups by school.

■ **INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION IN ALL ACTIVITIES**

- We learn from international experience, share our knowledge, and develop our activities.
- HAKA is internationally visible and contributes to the advancement of quality culture in third countries.

■ **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN LAW- AND POLICY-MAKING**

Estonian Education Strategy 2035; input into the amendment of the Vocational Educational Institutions Act and the Higher Education Act; development of the concept for quality assessment in continuing education; participation in the amendment process of the Adult Education Act; participation in the MER curriculum committees for higher education and vocational education; input into the amendment of the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act and the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act.

■ **EXCELLENT WORKING ENVIRONMENT AT HAKA**

The physical environment is modern and cosy; staff are motivated and proactive; staff turnover is low, and succession is ensured. HAKA is attractive as an employer.

WEAKNESSES

- **CONSTANT CONFLICT BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS: CONTROLLING VS SUPPORTIVE ASSESSMENT**

On the one hand, HAKA is expected to provide straightforward assessments (by the public, Supervisory Board, etc) and supportive assessments on the other (by educational institutions). The pointing out of shortcomings in media affects the level of co-operation of educational institutions.

- **VARIABLE QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT REPORTS**

It is difficult to set up assessment committees comprising experts with a high and uniform level of competence. Experts tend to interpret criteria in different ways, thorough preparatory work is required to provide clarification; the clarification of HAKA's expectations requires time and the continuous involvement of a coordinator is needed.

- **LACK OF EXPERTS IN THE ASSESSMENT OF CONTINUING EDUCATION**

There are few experts in continuing education who have previous assessment experience and, at times, it is difficult to find experts without ties to the assessed institution (conflict of interest).

- **DIFFERENT TYPES OF TASKS (incl technical) CAUSE FRAGMENTATION**

and do not allow for substantive issues to be dealt with in depth, which may affect the quality of work.

- **PROCEDURAL DIFFERENCES IN ASSESSMENTS (higher education, vocational education, continuing education)**

disrupt smooth shifting between tasks.

- **HIGH VARIABILITY OF THE VOLUME OF ASSESSMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES BY YEAR AND BY FIELD**

The main reason for this is that since the volume of assessments and development activities varies by year and by field, it is not possible to keep qualified staff on hold or outsource important and substantive tasks. Due to unstable (project-based) funding, the staff of HAKA is formed at minimum level, which means that, in some years, all staff members have a significantly higher workload than usual. Such a high workload does not allow for staff development or team building at an adequate level.

- **UNPREDICTABILITY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND CROSS-BORDER ASSESSMENTS**

We take a reactive approach to calls and invitations rather than focus on the long-term planning of projects and cross-border assessments. This may further temporarily impact staff workload and the quality of core activities.

- **LACK OF EFFICIENT DIGITAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND PUBLICATION OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

The current database of assessment results is not user-friendly and the assessment reports that are uploaded as PDF files do not allow for thematic searches. A digital solution is required for the effective management of the growing number of assessments.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **HAKA AS AN OPINION LEADER**

HAKA has the potential to be a more widely known opinion leader in its area of expertise; an opportunity to stimulate interest, introduce topics and, where necessary, rapidly react to issues arising in the society.

- **CAPACITY BUILDING IN GENERAL EDUCATION**

The task of enhancing the quality of general education allows HAKA to apply the experience gained in a new field and develop the specific capacity required for the execution of activities.

- **UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF THEMATIC REVIEWS AND ANALYSES at national level**

It is necessary to find ways to how the thematic reviews and analyses conducted by HAKA can better support national and sectoral strategies as well as those of assessed educational institutions. Based on the experience of continuing education, thematic reviews present a good opportunity for bringing about change in the field. At the same time, the reviews and analyses could be put into more use in respect to professional associations and other sectoral communities.

- **BROADENING THE SCOPE OF EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

It is crucial to increase planned communication with media outlets and take up the subject of education in society at large.

Reaching the target group of continuing education is a challenge (in terms of both continuing education institutions and learners).

- **PEER LEARNING AMONG EXPERTS**

Finding a balance between experienced experts and the new generation of experts, increasing the role of experienced experts in training, involving international experts in vocational education. Targeted efforts to increase the expert pool for continuing education – mentoring, coordinators. Actively recommending experts trained by HAKA to other agencies.

- **INCREASING THE ROLE OF TEACHERS**

- So far, learners have been pushed to the background in the assessment of continuing education, we have an opportunity to include the learner's perspective to a significantly greater degree, including through interviews and feedback analyses.

- The quality network would be more beneficial if the issues discussed gained more traction in educational institutions.

- In addition to the Assessment Council, learners in vocational education should also be included in assessment committees.
- In general education, it is essential to involve learners in quality development activities.

- **ENHANCEMENT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT CAPACITY OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

The enhancement of the self-assessment capacity of educational institutions would allow for the efficiency and impact of the entire quality assessment process to be improved: self-assessment training, quality management systems training, guidelines for conducting self-assessment.

- **STREAMLINING AND SIMPLIFICATION OF PROCEDURES RELATING TO HAKA'S ACTIVITIES**

it is important to initiate discussions on the possibility of combining and linking different assessments and reporting obligations (MER, OSKA, TAHVEL, etc), for example, by merging the evaluation of research with institutional accreditation, retrieving data from the public visual educational statistics database HaridusSilm for self-assessment purposes.

- **DIVERSIFICATION OF HAKA'S TEAM THROUGH GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

It is essential to take into account the need for gender balance enhancement both in the value propositions of competitive calls as well as the selection of equal candidates.

- **GREATER ATTENTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BOTH IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ASSESSMENT AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ORGANISATION**

Development of digital solutions for the management of assessment processes, application of a sustainable approach to organising assessment visits, implementation of activity-based office concept, reducing digital waste.

- **DIVERSIFICATION OF FUNDING SOURCES THROUGH INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS AND CROSS-BORDER ASSESSMENTS**

in order to reduce the risks of frozen funding in the coming years.

THREATS

- **FREQUENT CHANGES IN QUALITY ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS**

Excessively frequent changes in regulations lead to confusion among educational institutions and are detrimental to the comparability of assessment results.

- **STAFFING OF HAKA CANNOT KEEP PACE WITH INCREASING WORKLOADS**

It is difficult to forecast staffing needs in continuing education due to the voluntary nature of assessments. Fragmentation across different areas and projects increases the risk of burnout and failure to meet deadlines.

- **UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES MAY AFFECT HAKA'S IMAGE AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS CORE ACTIVITIES**

Frequent structural changes and unclear allocation of responsibilities in the Education and Youth Board also have a negative impact on the image of HAKA which is part of the Education and Youth Board.

- **OVERUSE OF LOCAL EXPERTS**

It is difficult to find Estonian experts in some areas; in the context of extending assessments to continuing education and general education, there exists a risk of using the same experts too often.

- **FUNDING DOES NOT TAKE SUFFICIENT ACCOUNT OF THE RISING COST OF LIVING AND WAGE GROWTH**

In particular, there is the risk that HAKA cannot offer competitive remuneration to experts if public funding does not take account of the rising cost of living and wage growth.