

**Decision Regarding the Assessment of the
Transport Services; and Engineering, Manufacturing and
Technology Study Programme Groups
Estonian Aviation Academy**

06/01/2017

The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET decided to approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the first cycle of higher education in the Transport Services; and Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology study programme groups at Estonian Aviation Academy in seven years, with a secondary condition

On the basis of subsection 21¹ (2) of the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act, point 3.8.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA') and point 41 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', authorised in point 3.8.1 of the above-mentioned EKKA Statutes; the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of EKKA (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 11.11.2015 Estonian Aviation Academy and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct the quality assessment of the study programme groups.
2. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 30.08.2016, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Transport Services; and Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology study programme groups in the first cycle of higher education at Estonian Aviation Academy (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Pascal Bauer – <i>Chair of the Committee</i>	Emeritus Professor, ENSMA – University of Poitiers – France
Pascal Revel	Professor, Directorate General of Civil Aviation, Bordeaux Airport – France
Markku Roschier	Creative Director at UAS Finland, Airline Management Technologies Oy – Finland
Philipp Schultz	Student member, RWTH Aachen University – Germany
Kristo Vallimäe	Civil Aviation Administration, Head of the Air Traffic Services

3. Estonian Aviation Academy submitted the following professional higher education programmes for evaluation under the **Transport Services study programme group**:

Air Traffic Services (professional higher education)

Aircraft Piloting (professional higher education)

Aviation Management (professional higher education)

Management of Aviation Communication and Navigation Systems (professional higher education)

In the **Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology study programme group** Estonian Aviation Academy submitted the following study programmes:

Aircraft Engineering and Maintenance (professional higher education)

4. Estonian Aviation Academy submitted a self-evaluation report to EKKA on 19.08.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 26.08.2016.
5. An assessment visit was made to Estonian Aviation Academy 26-27.10.2016.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to EKKA on 30.11.2016, EKKA forwarded it to Estonian Aviation Academy for its comments on 07.12.2016, and the Academy delivered its response on 16.12.2016.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to EKKA on 24.12.2016. That assessment report is an integral part of the decision, and is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee's final assessment report along with the University's self-evaluation report to the Council members on 29.12.2016.
9. The Council with 10 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 06.01.2017 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Transport Services; and Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology study programme groups in the first cycle of higher education at Estonian Aviation Academy.

Strengths

- 1) High rate of general satisfaction and motivation among students.
- 2) High employment rate of graduates in the sector of aviation.
- 3) Low drop out rate of students compared to other higher education institutions in Estonia.
- 4) The Academy has a well functioning system of internal quality assurance based on feedback and annual development interviews with all students and members of teaching staff.
- 5) Practitioners from Estonia and abroad are involved in teaching. There is good cooperation with employers, representatives of employers are involved in the work of study programme councils and in supervising dissertations.
- 6) The Academy supports students in finding places for work practice.

- 7) The new and modern building comes with well-equipped laboratories and good technical resources for speciality studies – i.e. the hangar where one can practice aircraft maintenance and simulators for Aircraft Piloting and Air Traffic Services students.
- 8) Library with all needed books, as well as access to different national and international digital databases.
- 9) Students are provided with free accommodation during their studies at the University of Technology in Tallinn.
- 10) Innovative teaching methods are in use. Use of state of the art digital tools is encouraged in teaching and learning.
- 11) Supervision of students is personal and efficient. Two thesis supervisors (one from the Academy and one from the company), supervisor training is provided.
- 12) Strong motivation and dedication of teaching staff.
- 13) Regular meetings and close co-operation among teaching staff. New teachers get support both from the Academy management and other teachers.
- 14) The Academy has increasing R&D activity.
- 15) Student feedback on teaching staff teaching aviation related subjects is positive. Students and teachers are in close contact and teaching staff is always available for students. Student feedback is taken into account in study programme development.
- 16) Employers are satisfied with the professional knowledge and skills of graduates.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The Academy needs to conduct a comparative analysis of its study programmes with similar programmes taught in Europe and to devise an action plan and long term development vision for developing study programmes and organisation of studies, which would be aligned with the changing needs of the labour market and developments in aviation sector. At present, according to the assessment committee, the Academy only maintains the *status quo* and sees no need for changes.
- 2) The structure and four year nominal study time of Estonian Aviation Academy study programmes diverges from common practice in Europe of students acquiring the skills required by the labour market in three years or less. This difference may hamper further internationalization, especially the enrolment of foreign students in Academy study programmes. It would be advisable for the Academy to gradually re-structure its four-year study programmes into three-year programmes.
- 3) Learning outcomes are very generic and concrete outcomes should be more explicitly formulated.
- 4) Aviation related subjects should be taught already in the first and second years of studies, so that students would have a better understanding of their field of studies as well as future work.
- 5) Practical instruction at Estonian Aviation Academy should be even better aligned with working in real life conditions: longer periods of practical training in the Air Traffic Services study programme, trainings of conflict resolution for students of Aviation Management, a general overview of systems and structures for the students of Management of Aviation Communication and Navigation Systems.
- 6) Studies are divided between three locations, which may become a challenge in terms of logistics and efficient time management. The Academy needs to ensure that all students have enough time between classes to get from one location to another, or alternatively to deliver all courses at least in the first two years of the programmes on the main campus of Estonian Aviation Academy.
- 7) Courses taught in various partner institutions (University of Tartu, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tallinn University of Technology) should be better-coordinated and interlinked with

practical instruction provided at the Academy. At times it is unclear how courses taught at partner institutions fit in with the study programme as a whole.

- 8) Compared to similar study programmes in Europe, the workload of Estonian Aviation Academy students is very high. There are few elective subjects, which leaves little freedom to students to design their own study path. More flexibility should be added to the study programmes by decreasing the share of compulsory courses and increasing the share of electives and independent work.
 - 9) Speciality modules should be conducted in English. As the partner institutions (other universities) are also designing courses in English, these should also be integrated into the study programmes to increase the share of studies conducted in English
 - 10) The majority of prospective students wish to enrol in the Aircraft Piloting or Air Traffic Services programmes, which means higher admission thresholds than for the other programmes. The academic level of admitted students diverges across different study programmes. More emphasis should be put into the marketing of “less popular” study programmes in order to attract greater interest among prospective students and thereby raise the overall quality of students at the Academy.
 - 11) In order to ensure sustainability of the Aircraft Piloting programme it is important to mitigate risks involved with renting aircrafts from a small private enterprise.
 - 12) English language proficiency of teaching staff should be enhanced in order to conduct more instruction than hitherto in English and in better English.
 - 13) A personalized development plan, in line with the general development goals of Estonian Aviation Academy, should be devised for each teacher.
 - 14) Teachers should be incentivized to analyse and assess the contents of their courses as well as their teaching skills in a more critical manner.
 - 15) Teaching staff workload is distributed unevenly - i.e. more teachers are needed for the Air Traffic Services study programme.
 - 16) To raise awareness among students about different cultures and countries, foreign teachers should be invited to teach and external mobility of Estonian Aviation Academy teaching staff should be encouraged.
 - 17) Internationalisation rate at study programmes (including external student mobility) is currently very limited. In order for students to benefit from international student mobility, changes need to be made in the curriculum and transfer of credits earned abroad should be made possible.
 - 18) Estonian Aviation Academy should offer more short-term continuing education to be able to react better to the changing needs of the labour market. Simulators could be used more either for conducting additional training or for renting out.
- 10.** Point 41 of the document, ‘Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education’, establishes that the Quality Assessment Council shall approve an assessment report within three months after receipt of the report. The Council shall weigh the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations pointed out in the assessment report, and then shall decide whether to conduct the next quality assessment of that study programme group in seven years, or in less than seven years.
- 11.** The Council weighed the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations referred to in point 9 of this document and found that the study programmes, the teaching conducted under these programmes, and development activities regarding teaching and learning conform to the requirements, if the Academy eliminates the following shortcomings:
- 1) According to subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act and standard described in point 5.1.1 of the document ‘Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of

Higher Education' adopted on the basis of point 3.7.1 of EKKA Statutes *the launch or development of the study programme is based, among others, on development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.* Estonian Aviation Academy has not conducted an analysis of the contents and volumes of its study programmes compared to similar study programmes taught in Europe. Likewise the Academy lacks a vision for development for its study programmes and organisation of studies.

- 2) According to the standard described in point 5.1.3 of the document 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education' *different parts of the study programme must form a coherent whole.* It is not always clear how courses taught at different partner institutions fit in with the practical courses taught at Estonian Aviation Academy and the study programme as a whole.
 - 3) According to subsection 6 (4) of the Regulation of the Government of the Republic 'Standard of Higher Education' *the objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme shall be formulated in a way that they provide a basis for evaluation of the knowledge and skills of graduates of that study programme.* The learning outcomes, as formulated at present, are very general, which makes it impossible to assess the knowledge and skills of graduates to the full extent.
12. According to clause 53 (1) 2) of the Administrative Procedure Act, *a secondary condition of an administrative act is an additional duty related to the principal regulation of the administrative act,* and according to clause 53 (1) 3) it is also *a supplementary condition for the creation of a right arising from the principal regulation of the administrative act.* Clauses 53 (2) 2) and 3) establish that *a secondary condition may be imposed on an administrative act if the administrative act cannot be issued without the secondary condition, or if issue of the administrative act must be resolved on the basis of an administrative right of discretion.* The Council found that, without a secondary condition, the next quality assessment of the study programme group should be conducted in less than seven years, and on the basis of points 41.1 and 42 of the document 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education'

DECIDED

to approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Transport Services; and Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology study programme groups in the first cycle of higher education at Estonian Aviation Academy in seven years with the following secondary condition:

Estonian Aviation Academy shall submit by 06.01.2018 the following documents in English 1) a comparative analysis of its study programmes with similar programmes taught in Europe 2) an action plan and report on the elimination of shortcomings detailed in point 11. Some members of the assessment committee shall be invited to evaluate progress made on the secondary condition imposed.

The decision was adopted by 10 votes in favour. Against 0.

13. In case Estonian Aviation Academy does not comply with the secondary condition by the due date, the Council will repeal this assessment decision and set a new date for a quality assessment of the study programme group, or establish a new secondary condition.

14. The Council proposes to Estonian Aviation Academy that they also submit to EKKA by 06.01.2018 an action plan on the implementation of other areas for improvement and recommendations mentioned in the assessment report.
15. A person who finds that his or her rights are violated or his or her freedoms are restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding. A judicial challenge to the decision may be submitted within 30 days after its delivery, filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

Tõnu Meidla
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council