



**EKKA**

**EKKA Quality Manual**

**2012**

# EKKA Quality Manual

## 2012



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# Preface

When drafting this Quality Manual, we kept in mind the following three objectives:

1. To test whether EKKA's key activities are all based on similar principles, rules and procedures, and to unify them where possible, as needed.
2. To detail all procedures related to EKKA's key activities, assisting current and future EKKA employees in their everyday work and providing them with a single reference which allows them to readily verify that the procedures of evaluation processes are implemented in compliance with regulations and agreements, thereby assuring the highest quality.
3. To provide its partners and other interested parties an overview of the functioning of EKKA as a learning organisation, and to make public the methods that EKKA uses to ensure independence of its activities, reliability of its reports and objectivity of its decisions.

The Quality Manual opens with an overview of EKKA's mission, core values, objectives, and principles of external quality evaluation. EKKA follows the principles of the quality circle (PDCA — PlanDoCheckAct) in both its activities and its Quality Manual. Chapter 1 provides a description of how development planning, personnel development and resource management are performed in EKKA. The main part of the Quality Manual focuses on the description of how the quality of external evaluation — EKKA's core process — is assured. In a separate chapter, we included communication as one of the support processes; which, from the aspects of publication and dissemination of evaluation results, can also be regarded as part of EKKA's core process (i.e. external evaluation).

The Quality Manual is a working document that is supplemented as needed, and reviewed at least once a year.

The Quality Manual is coordinated by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council.

**Heli Mattisen**  
Director of EKKA

# Introduction

The Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA) is a leading competence centre in the field of external evaluation of educational institutions in Estonia. EKKA acts in accordance with agreements and trends in the European higher education and vocational education areas, also retaining information about trends and best practices outside Europe; applies up-to-date know-how tailored to a local context; and employs analyses of the results of external quality evaluations to enhance competitiveness of the Estonian educational system.

EKKA's **mission** is, in cooperation with its partners, to promote quality in the field of education and thereby increase the competitiveness of the Estonian society.

EKKA's **core process** is the external evaluation of educational institutions which includes the following **key activities**:

- 1) Institutional accreditation of higher education institutions
- 2) Quality assessment of study programme groups in higher education
- 3) Initial assessment of study programme groups
- 4) Re-evaluations of transitional evaluations
- 5) Accreditation of study programme groups in vocational education and training

The key activities are accompanied and supported by the following **support activities**:

- Training of assessment experts
- Counselling and training of educational institutions
- Communication of evaluation results to the general public
- Analysis of evaluation results and the provision of recommendations for improvement to both the educational institutions and the Ministry of Education and Research
- Participation in international networks related to external evaluation of educational institutions

## EKKA's Core Values

<b>Equity:</b>	applying the principles of equal treatment in all its activities
<b>Competency:</b>	commanding original and up-to-date know-how in its field; including experienced external assessors; engaging in continuous professional development and introducing the results of its activities internationally
<b>Cooperation:</b>	including partners in development activities, flexibly accommodating their needs and capabilities
<b>Openness:</b>	being open to new ideas, flexibly reacting to changes in the environment; maintaining the transparency of evaluation procedures and publicising the results

EKKA builds its internal quality assurance system and external evaluation processes on the **Continuous Quality Improvement** approach according to which the quality is a continuous improvement. An organisation's desire that its activities and the results thereof would meet the formulated needs and unformulated expectations of both internal and external stakeholders serves as the basis for that continuous quality improvement.

### Initial Principles of External Evaluation

- 1) External evaluation procedures are in accordance with the legislation and strategies of the Republic of Estonia as well as with international trends, and take into consideration European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
- 2) The primary purpose of external evaluation is to provide educational institutions with feedback that supports their development.
- 3) All principal stakeholders of external evaluation provide their inputs during the process of developing the evaluation policies and procedures; educational institutions slated for evaluation in the future, are especially included in the development process.
- 4) The focus of external evaluations is upon the basic processes of an educational institution; in the case of institutional accreditation, the focus is directed to the incumbent organisational management and the functioning of the organisation, along with the coherence between the two, and how they each relate to the organisation's strategic objectives.
- 5) When evaluating educational institutions, the experts evaluate them from both national and international points of view.
- 6) When developing regulations for external evaluations, EKKA follows the logic of the Quality Circle (PDCA): how the planning, applying, evaluating and improving of results are enacted.
- 7) Requirements and indicators are formulated in a way that allows one to assess an input, processes and an output, and guides higher education institutions to compare themselves with similar higher education institutions in Estonia and abroad.
- 8) EKKA's use of resources is economic and effective: the primary purpose of external evaluation must be achieved with the minimum time, financial and human resources that are needed.

# 1. Management and Operation of the Organisation

## 1.1. Planning of Development and Activities

Objective: to direct the activities of all relevant parties to achieve common goals. Principles: relevance, flexibility and self-motivation.

### 1.1.1 Stages of Development Plan Preparation

We —

- analyse Estonian and international contexts
- ask “if and why we are needed”
- formulate/review our mission — what is the purpose of our existence? EKKA’s mission is very much formulated by law, but it can be supplemented
- estimate our resources and capabilities to achieve our mission
- define ourselves — who we are in a given moment, how we relate to the context
- formulate our vision — where we want to go, what we want to become
- formulate/review our objectives — what objectives must be achieved to realise our vision
- define indicators through which we know that we have achieved our objectives and/or moved in a right direction, and we define target levels or deadlines for achieving objectives
- plan activities for each calendar year by objectives, on the basis of which we will prepare a work plan which is reviewed and supplemented on a continuous basis
- estimate the need for additional resources and include those needs in our budget

### 1.1.2. Inclusion

- All EKKA employees participate in drafting development and action plans.
- The main stakeholders (higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education and Research, and students) have provided their input in the drafting of the new external evaluation system and EKKA’s statutes, helping to formulate EKKA’s mission and key activities. EKKA analyses stakeholder satisfaction with its activities and their

expectations through various feedback surveys on a regular basis; and based on the findings, EKKA will also make amendments to its development plan.

- Based on the drafts of development and action plans, EKKA quality assessment councils discuss EKKA's strategy in two sessions: 1) the first reading and coordination; and 2) consideration of the feedback and modification as needed.
- The drafts of development and action plans are discussed with the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation, feedback will be taken into consideration and drafts will be improved.
- The drafts of development and action plans are discussed at a meeting of the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation, feedback will be taken into consideration and drafts will be improved.
- The development plan and the action plan approved by EKKA quality assessment councils will be published and presented to EKKA's partners: higher education institutions (Estonian Rectors' Conference and Estonian Rectors' Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences), vocational education institutions (seminars of the Association of the Development of Estonian Vocational Education), employees of relevant fields (higher education, vocational education, also general education in the future), and students (Federation of Estonian Student Unions). Analysis of feedback will be conducted, and modification of documents will be performed as needed.

### **1.1.3. Review and Improvement Activities — as needed, but at least once a year (changes in the environment, feedback received, etc.)**

- EKKA development seminars
- Sessions of quality assessment councils to follow the development seminars

## **1.2. Personnel Management**

Objective: to achieve its goals, EKKA has included the optimum number of competent specialists (regular employees, members of quality assessment councils, experts) who are motivated and develop themselves professionally on a regular basis.

### **1.2.1. EKKA Regular Employees**

- Defining the necessary composition and set of competencies for the EKKA Bureau to achieve its mission and objectives — identifying competences needed to perform EKKA's functions, and the occupational structure and number of employees to best ensure the achievement of EKKA's objectives. The principle: new positions are created based on the necessity for additional competencies arising from objectives of the development plan or on the increase in the workload in specific fields.
- Defining main areas of responsibility for each EKKA employee: Each employee has up to three main areas of responsibility based on his or her competencies, and co-responsibility in each area is delegated to one more employee. In addition to their main areas of responsibility, all EKKA employees, except the Accountant, (also) participate



in implementing the core process. The implementation of this principle is reviewed once a year at an EKKA meeting as a result of the development seminar and development interviews.

- When planning evaluation periods, process managers of key activities estimate the workload of assistants, and EKKA will include assistants from outside EKKA in the evaluation process as needed (a common practice in transitional evaluation, accreditation of vocational education and training, re-evaluation). All assistants undergo EKKA trainings together with the experts.

## The EKKA Bureau: Positions and Assignment of Duties

Position	Areas of responsibility	Participation in the core process	Networking and distribution of information	Additional activities
<b>Director</b> Heli Mattisen	Development planning; personnel management; financial management; reporting.	Launches and directs development teams; analyses evaluation activities; communicates evaluation results to the public; trains experts.	Represents EKKA at ENQA, INQAAHE, CEENQA networks; represents EKKA at various national working groups and networks; member of the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation; counsels and trains personnel for both higher education institutions and vocational education institutions.	General management of the ESF programmes (planning, budgeting, talks with implementation task forces and project promoters, etc.).
<b>Development Manager</b> Maiki Udam	External evaluation related development; international cooperation; process manager of institutional accreditation.	Coordinates institutional accreditation (is a support person for assessment committees); organises and conducts trainings for experts; analyses key activities (including feedback) and publishes the results.	ENQA project entitled <i>Transparency of European higher education through public quality assurance reports</i> ; the ENQA working groups (Internal QA and Stakeholder Involvement); Estonian promoter of the Bologna process; counsels and trains personnel for both higher education institutions and vocational education institutions.	Coordinates the ESF programme entitled <i>Development of the Quality of Estonian Higher Education (EkkA)</i> and reports on it; organises seminars and trainings; maintains flowers in the EKKA office.
<b>Evaluation Expert (higher education)</b> Hillar Bauman	Process manager of evaluations of study programme groups (transitional evaluation, re-evaluation, quality assessment of study programme groups and initial assessment of study programme groups); Secretary of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council.	Coordinates evaluations of study programme groups; counsels assessment committees; analyses feedback and makes recommendations for modifying regulations for evaluations; and prepares analyses of evaluation periods.	Member of the committee at the Estonian Education Information System for registering study programmes; counsels personnel for higher education institutions; and publishes evaluation results.	Assists assessment committees; coordinates EKKA's activities under the Implementation Programme of the <i>Estonian higher education information and communications technology and research and development activities state programme 2011-2015 (ICT programme)</i> and reports on it; maintains a water cooler in the EKKA office; receives guests.
<b>Evaluation Expert (vocational education)</b> Marge Kroonmäe	Process manager of accreditation of study programme groups in vocational education and training; Secretary of the Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education and Training.	Coordinates accreditations; trains experts; prepares analyses.	Represents Estonia in the EQAVET working group; participates in the work of the council for the ESF programme entitled <i>Substantive Development of Vocational Education 2008–2013 (KUKVA)</i> ; counsels personnel for vocational education institutions; publishes evaluation results.	Administers the ESF programme entitled <i>Substantive Development of Vocational Education 2008–2013 (KUKVA)</i> ; organises trainings and seminars.
<b>Information Manager</b> Liia Tüür	Coordinates internal and external communications; administers the EKKA website; compiles information materials.	Develops, administers and reviews evaluation platforms; develops, administers and reviews the feedback system; coordinates the work of assessment committees of institutional accreditations.	The ENQA project entitled <i>Transparency of European higher education through public quality assurance reports</i> ; the Communication working group of Archimedes; transmits evaluation results according to target groups.	Assists assessment committees; reviews payment claims of the ESF programme entitled <i>Substantive Development of Vocational Education 2008–2013 (KUKVA)</i> ; organises trainings and seminars; EKKA's contact person at Datel, the IT support company.
<b>Lawyer</b> Lagle Zobel	Draws up administrative documents (regulations, ordinances etc); prepares and administers contracts; ensures the conformity of EKKA's evaluation regulations with laws of the Republic of Estonia and other regulations providing for higher education quality assessment.	Draws up decision drafts for the Quality Assessment Council; monitors the compliance of evaluation activities with the procedural rules.	Participates in the ENQA Excellence working group; cooperates with lawyers of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research to improve current legislation; gives legal advice to educational institutions and experts in issues related to external evaluation; responds to requests for information.	Maintains the registry for EKKA's contracts; draws up certificates of transfer deeds; ensures the performance of the contract for counselling educational institutions on internal evaluation, and reports on it.
<b>Assistant Adviser</b> Tiia Bach	Manages documentation, correspondence and EKKA's office; procures office supplies.	Assists assessment committees who evaluate study programme groups in higher education and vocational education; acts as coordinator for assessment committees of institutional accreditation.	The ENQA project entitled <i>Transparency of European higher education through public quality assurance reports</i> .	Assists evaluation committees; reviews payment claims of the ESF programme entitled <i>Development of the Quality of Estonian Higher Education (EkkA)</i> , inspects and registers payment documents; organises trainings and seminars.
<b>Accountant</b> Merike Arpo	Budgeting, accountancy and reporting.		Financial Department of Archimedes	Draws up payment applications for ESF programmes.

**Selection:** Public competition. The selection is based on the following principles: the EKKA employees are competent in their areas of responsibility, capable of taking initiative, cooperation and self-development oriented; they tolerate pressure and stress well, are open to changes, proficient in different forms of communication (correspondence, presentations, teamwork, negotiations, etc.), and very proficient in English.

**Development:** Development interviews are conducted once a year (September–October). Objectives: to support employees' professional development; to get feedback on the management of the office, organisation of work and allocation of tasks; and to identify the priorities and training needs for the next year. The basis: employees' self-evaluations based on the objectives set and training needs identified in the previous year. The result: activity priorities and new training needs have been identified for the next period. Suggestions concerning the management, organisation of work and allocation of tasks are discussed at EKKA meetings, and changes will be made as needed. The Director of EKKA will formalise trainings in the following year's written training plan, and the results of development interviews on the relevant forms. Each EKKA employee fills in his or her training sheet on a regular basis, evaluating the impact of his or her trainings, among other things.

**Motivation:** Objectives: to recognise employees for their contributions to achievement of common objectives; increase their initiative and responsibility for the organisation's well-being and its image; and encourage loyalty. Means: 1) joint events: Christmas parties, summer picnics, birthday celebrations, cooperation seminars with other agencies, and development seminars with quality assessment councils; 2) recognition at EKKA meetings; 3) recognition at ceremonial public meetings of the Archimedes Foundation; 4) possibility for a day off from work; 5) bonuses for outstanding results related to key activities.

### 1.2.2. Members of EKKA Quality Assessment Councils

**Selection:** Procedures for formation of the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education are provided for in laws regulating higher education (e.g. § 10 of the *Universities Act*) and in the *Procedure for Formation of EKKA Quality Assessment Council*. The formation of the Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education and Training is described in the *Procedure for Formation of EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education and Training*.

**Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education:** EKKA will publicly announce the submission of candidates in accordance with its announcement form. A pre-selection committee, formed by the Chairperson of the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation at the suggestion of the Director of EKKA, will evaluate candidates' compliance with requirements. The pre-selection committee will include at least one member of the Supervisory Board of the Archimedes Foundation who has no conflicts of interest (is not affiliated with any institutions who submitted the candidates), the Secretary of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council and the Director of EKKA. The committee will develop a proposal for the composition of the Quality Assessment Council to the Supervisory Board of the Archimedes Foundation for its approval, based on the qualifying candidates and the established requirements and limitations. If necessary, the committee will invite the candidates for interview.

**Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education and Training:** The EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education and Training has been formed within the framework of the ESF programme entitled *Substantive Development of Vocational Education 2008–2013*

(KUKVA). As long as the activity is only performed within the framework of the ESF programme and not regulated by Estonian legislation, the Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education and Training has not been included in the Statutes of EKKA. The formation procedures of the Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education and Training are in accordance with the principles developed within the framework of that programme. EKKA will publicly announce the submission of candidates in accordance with its announcement form. A pre-selection committee, composed by an order of the Director of EKKA, will evaluate candidates' compliance with requirements. The pre-selection committee will include at least one member of the Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education and Training, who is not one of the candidates and who has no conflicts of interest (is not affiliated with any institutions who submitted the candidates), the Secretary of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council, and the Director of EKKA. The committee will develop a proposal for the composition of the Quality Assessment Council to the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation for approval, based on the qualifying candidates and established requirements and limitations. If necessary, the committee shall invite the candidates for interview.

**Development:** EKKA will provide the members of quality assessment councils with introductory trainings related to external evaluation; include them in trainings for experts (also as trainers); offer them opportunities to participate and present papers in international thematic conferences; if possible, organise one study visit to a foreign agency during each term; include the quality assessment councils in regular joint seminars with Finnish, Latvian and Lithuanian agencies; and recommend them as experts to other agencies.

**Motivation:** By providing recognition for members of quality assessment councils in their first sessions and at the ends of calendar years. By providing remuneration according to the number of sessions participated in. Joint events will include activities that develop teamwork.

### 1.2.3. Experts

Competent experts are the key to professional external evaluation. EKKA aims to find and retain both local and foreign experts, depending on the specifics of a particular external evaluation.

## Selection procedures

### Local experts

- Public competition will be based on evaluation timetables and the specifics of evaluations. An open call for applications will be target-group oriented (modified to take into account differences among students, employers and representatives of higher education institutions). The coordinator or Evaluation Expert will also make targeted offers to specific people who will be invited to participate in public competition.
- One may participate in public competition using an alternative CV, if it contains data arising from the specifics of the evaluation (past experience in quality evaluation, proficiency in English, etc.) or if such data is added to the CV.
- For more successful competitions, process managers of key activities or evaluation coordinators will cooperate with professional associations, professional councils and employers' organisations.
- The application form to become an EKKA expert is continuously made available on EKKA's website. (Including in the non-competition period).
- The experts who comply with the qualification requirements but do not have past experience in quality evaluation, will be entered into the EKKA expert database after they have undergone the EKKA training, conducted at least once a year.
- The manager of the corresponding process will reply to all competition participants, thanking them for their participation and informing them whether or not they were selected. In the case of being selected, the reply will include the time for the next training and a proposal to participate in it. In the case of not being selected, the reply will include the reasons for it.
- The Assistant Adviser of EKKA administers the platform for applications on the EKKA website and redirects applications to corresponding process managers. The next step will be the same as described in the previous bullet point above.

### Foreign experts

- For institutional accreditation and quality assessment of study programme groups, EKKA will employ foreign experts who have been recommended by other agencies or who have been entered into the EKKA foreign expert database.
- Websites of various international professional associations and competent quality evaluation organisations serve as another valuable source for information on experts with past experience in quality evaluation, and EKKA's process managers may make a direct offer to any such listed expert.
- When selecting experts from the EKKA foreign expert database, the specifics of a particular evaluation as well as feedback on the expert's previous work (feedback from the chairperson of an assessment committee and the assistant/coordinator) will be taken into account.

**Procedures for forming assessment committees****Institutional accreditation and quality assessment of study programme groups**

- When choosing committee members, the coordinator will ensure that all necessary competencies required by objectives of a specific evaluation and by the specifics of the educational institution under evaluation, would be represented in the committee, and that the committee members have no conflicts of interest. An invitation to participate in the work of an assessment committee will include the list of duties of a member/ chairperson of the assessment committee, a timetable for the evaluation process and a request to confirm the absence of a conflict of interest (according to the definition of the conflict of interest by a regulation for the corresponding evaluation).
- Requirements for committee members are described in EKKA evaluation regulations. EKKA prefers the experts with past evaluation experience and whose work has received evidence-based positive feedback.
- When choosing experts from among local employers for a committee which will evaluate a specific study programme group, the coordinator will cooperate with appropriate professional associations, professional councils or employers' organisations including their representatives in the selection process.
- The Secretary of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council will inform the Council about the planned composition of a committee; the Council members may make suggestions for replacing members of the committee or adding members to it.
- After the preliminary composition of a committee has been discussed with the Quality Assessment Council, the coordinator will send information about the committee composition to the relevant higher education institution for agreement. The higher education institution has the right to object to the involvement of some members (including its reasons). If the reasons are appropriate, EKKA will find substitute members and reaffirm the committee composition with the educational institution.
- The Director of EKKA will approve the final composition of the committee by his or her order at least three months before the assessment visit.

**Re-evaluation / transitional evaluation and initial assessment of study programme groups**

- Differences compared to the procedures described above:
- A committee is comprised of four to five experts, one being a student and one an employer representative. A committee may be composed of local experts only if the required competence is available in Estonia.
- If the EKKA database does not contain appropriate candidates, EKKA will announce public competition for finding an expert for a specific evaluation (also using other support activities which are described above under *Selection procedures* regarding *Local experts*).

### Accreditation of vocational education and training

- The Director of EKKA will, by his or her order, form a selection committee which includes at least two members of the Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education and Training, and one representative of a professional association, employer organisation or professional council related to the study programme group under evaluation. The EKKA Evaluation Expert will be the secretary of that committee.
- Based on the need for employer and education experts in a specific evaluation period, the selection committee will choose from amongst candidates the individuals who best comply with the set requirements.
- As a rule, an assessment committee is comprised of three experts or, if necessary, four, including both the employer and education experts.
- The EKKA Evaluation Expert will determine preliminary compositions of committees for each educational institution, taking into consideration requirements for calibration of the committee and for the absence of conflicts of interest. The compositions of assessment committees will be coordinated with the selection committee and, after the relevant schools have also agreed to the preliminary compositions, the Director of EKKA will approve those compositions by his or her order.

**Development:** Providing trainings for experts on a regular basis (in addition to introductory trainings, the so-called refreshment trainings); and counselling throughout the evaluation process. The assessment coordinator will send summaries of feedback from educational institutions to experts and offer them opportunities to participate in future trainings.

**Motivation:** Competitive salaries; letters of appreciation and recognitions at concluding seminars, including expressions of gratitude to the employers of experts.

## 1.3. Resource Management

### 1.3.1. Infrastructure

The objective: to provide EKKA employees, quality assessment councils and assessment committees with a creative and comfortable work environment, equipped with modern technical tools and information systems. The employees of the EKKA Bureau have been included in management of the infrastructure in order to optimise operating costs and share responsibility for designing the work environment.

Review: by development interviews, feedback from members of quality assessment councils and assessment committees. Discussion of those results at EKKA meetings and planning improvements as needed: immediate improvements when resources are available; major developments will be included in the budget for subsequent periods.

### 1.3.2. Finances

The objective: EKKA's core process and related development activities are covered by sufficient funds and the use of resources is economic and effective: the primary purpose of external evaluation must be achieved with minimum time, financial and human resources needed to meet objectives.

Planning: the Director of EKKA will prepare a long-term quantitative estimate of EKKA's key activities (regular external evaluations) for five to seven years and coordinate it with the sponsor (the Ministry of Education and Research, through its Department of Higher Education and Office of Vocational Education). The Development Manager will acquire additional resources for EKKA's development activities (through ESF or other EU and Estonian programmes). Each May, based on a projection and preliminary agreements with educational institutions, the Director of EKKA submits a request to the Ministry of Education and Research for funds needed to finance EKKA's activities in the following calendar year.

Review: the Accountant will prepare a report on the implementation of the budget on a quarterly basis. Once a year the Director of EKKA will, together with the Accountant, prepare activity and financial reports and submit them to the sponsor.



## 2. Quality Assurance of the Core Process

EKKA's external evaluation practice is based on the self-evaluation/site visit/draft report/published report/follow-up model. Specific requirements and evaluation procedures are described in evaluation regulations, the review and revision of which will rest with process managers of key activities (titles and names shown in brackets) as follows:

Conditions and Procedure for Institutional Accreditation

(Development Manager: Maiki Udam)

Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education

(Evaluation Expert: Hillar Bauman)

Accreditation of Study Programme Groups in Vocational Education and Training

(Evaluation Expert: Marge Kroonmäe)

When a higher education institution applies for the right to conduct studies under a new study programme group, EKKA will conduct an initial assessment of that study programme group, on the basis of the written information submitted by the higher education institution, and an assessment visit. The written information will include a compliance analysis on learning outcomes of study programmes with those of the Standard of Higher Education, descriptions of the organisation of practical training as well as student and teaching staff mobility, among other things. Specific requirements and evaluation procedures are described in the following evaluation regulations:

Requirements and Procedure for Transitional Evaluation and Re-evaluation of Study Programme Groups

(Evaluation Expert: Hillar Bauman)

Guidelines for Initial Assessment of Study Programme Groups

(Evaluation Expert: Hillar Bauman)

### 2.1. Design of Key Activities

#### 2.1.1. Development of Regulations

General principles: to include all principal stakeholders in the development of regulations (primarily those who undergo evaluations), to prevent substantial overlaps between different types of evaluations, and to save time for both those under evaluation and assessors, without compromising the quality of results.

- Initial activities: to identify stakeholder expectations for a planned quality evaluation, including educational institutions, employers, the state, learners and individuals who continue to pursue education. Different formats will be used — focus group interviews, seminars, written questionnaires.
- The development of regulations will be preceded by the following activities: preparing a background analysis, learning the best practices, and developing basic principles. To this effect, the Director of EKKA will form a content team whose task will be to develop an initial draft based on information received from stakeholders and on other expertise. The content team will include experts with experience in internal and external evaluations of higher education, and related research.
- To develop a regulation, the Director of EKKA will convene a steering group, including representatives of all stakeholders. The Information Manager of EKKA will send a draft approved by the steering group, along with an explanatory memorandum, to all stakeholders (all educational institutions, learners, employers' and entrepreneurs' organisations concerned) requesting their feedback.
- Based on the feedback received, the leader of the steering group will revise the initial draft and subsequently coordinate the changes with members of the steering group.
- The Evaluation Expert will send the agreed draft to the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for approval.
- The Information Manager of EKKA will inform those who provided feedback about all proposed amendments and additions along with those changes actually made.
- The EKKA Quality Assessment Council will approve the regulation in its session. The Information Manager will then communicate the resulting information to all interested parties, taking into consideration the specifics of target groups.
- The approved regulations, together with their explanatory memoranda, are publicly available on the EKKA website.

### 2.1.2. Planning of Evaluation Periods

- When launching a new type of evaluation, EKKA will first conduct a pilot phase. The Director of EKKA and the process manager of the corresponding key activity will (in concert with the educational institutions concerned) plan one or two evaluations for one semester, so that the shortcomings revealed during such preliminary evaluations can be avoided during future evaluations.
- In the case of regular evaluations, process managers will make suggestions for evaluation timetables to the Director of EKKA, who will then send these timetables to educational institutions for their approval. Timetables are prepared for one full round of evaluations, i.e. for the period during which all those who are required to undergo the evaluation will be evaluated.
- While preparing the timetables, process managers will cooperate with one another and ensure that one school would not have too much burden in one period; take into consideration the current state of a school's infrastructure development and possible structural changes; take into account suggestions made by the Ministry of Education and Research; and reasonably apportion the workload over different years.
- Based on the agreed timetable, the Director of EKKA proposes that an educational institution submits an application to undergo the evaluation during a specific period.

- The timetable for evaluations will be modified as appropriate, as well as by requests from educational institutions.
- The process manager/coordinator/assistant and educational institution will agree on a specific week for an assessment visit nine to twelve months ahead of time.

### 2.2. Implementation of Key Activities

#### 2.2.1. Assessment Committees

- All EKKA's evaluation regulations include a) the principles for forming assessment committees and b) the requirements for members of an assessment committee; the first defines objective parameters for forming a committee (whom EKKA seeks), and the second defines specific requirements for the competence of experts (which candidate EKKA selects). Both criteria may vary depending on the type of evaluation.
- Procedures for selection of assessment experts and for formation of committees are described in subdivision 1.2.3. of this Manual.
- EKKA will coordinate the preliminary composition of an expert committee with the higher education institution under evaluation, taking into consideration the institution's justified requests for replacing some members.
- EKKA will inform experts about the requirements established for them and the essence of assessment procedures at a training before the evaluation, mandatory for all experts and a prerequisite for participating in the evaluation.
- The format of a training may differ depending on the target group and objectives of the training:
  - 1) Regular higher education expert trainings for local experts are conducted once a year (in October). Target group: representatives of higher education institutions, students and employers who have submitted applications to become higher education experts for EKKA. Such trainings last for up to three days. The main difference in this training, compared with other EKKA expert trainings, is that (as a rule) experts do not yet know when they will be used in an evaluation; therefore, materials of previous evaluations are used as illustrative material and serve as a basis for practical work.
  - 2) Trainings for experts in study programme groups of vocational education are (as a rule) conducted twice a year (in January and August). Target group: the experts selected for the evaluation of a specific study programme group (see 1.2.3 above). The duration of a training is up to three days. By the time of a training, higher education institutions have submitted their reports on study programme groups, analyses of which will be integrated in the training. The composition of assessment committees, their chairpersons and assistants have already been determined by the time of a training.
  - 3) Introductory trainings for local experts are conducted as needed and, if possible, at least one month prior to an assessment visit. Target group: local experts whose inclusion in a committee is necessary because of their competence but who have not yet participated in an EKKA expert training.
  - 4) EKKA organises trainings for committees that include foreign experts one day before a site visit (primarily in the case of institutional accreditation or external evaluation of study programme groups). Before the

training, the coordinator sends experts assessment forms and instructional materials.

- An EKKA representative will support experts throughout the evaluation process. In the case of institutional accreditation and quality assessment of study programme groups, the role of a support person is performed by the coordinator who has been appointed to an assessment committee; and in the case of accreditation of study programme groups in vocational education and initial assessment of study programme groups, this role is performed by the relevant process manager.

### 2.2.2. Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports

The effectiveness (benefits, impact) of external evaluation depends on the thoroughness, comprehensiveness, clarity and linguistic comprehensibility of self-evaluation reports by educational institutions. EKKA's contribution to educational institutions' self-evaluation reports will be as follows:

- EKKA offers self-evaluation-related free trainings to educational institutions.
- Educational institutions may request additional assistance from EKKA on how to interpret criteria or requirements, and/or on the planning of the self-evaluation process (15 man-hours; rates are established by the chairman of the Management Board of Archimedes and are made public on the EKKA website).
- EKKA receives English versions of self-evaluation reports three months before assessment visits. EKKA has the right to return the report to the school if it does not contain information deemed important, if its structure is inappropriate, if the report is not presented in correct English, etc.

### 2.2.3. Assessment Visits (Preparation and Conduct)

- The coordinator will send a self-evaluation report, assessment forms and individual assignments to members of an assessment committee at least two months before a site visit.
- Members of an assessment committee will send their comments along with questions to be answered before or during the site visit to the coordinator, two weeks after receipt of the self-evaluation report. The comments and questions will be written in the evaluation form according to the evaluation criteria (see evaluation forms on EKKA's website). An alternative: committee members will submit them on a form available in Dropbox.
- Based on questions by the committee members, the coordinator will compile a list of individuals to be interviewed, and a draft timetable for the site visit within a week.
- The coordinator will agree upon the draft timetable with committee members within a week.
- No later than one month before the site visit, the coordinator will send the approved timetable to the contact person of the higher education institution under evaluation for agreement, including details about space requirements, catering, the number and profile of individuals participating in meetings, etc.
- The coordinator will prepare worksheets for interviews, matching the questions sent by committee members with the areas of

responsibility of interviewees. The coordinator will send the completed worksheets to committee members to be reviewed and supplemented as needed, at least two weeks before the site visit.

- No later than one week before the site visit, the coordinator will request that the contact person of the higher education institution reply to any additional questions and return background information on interviewees (e.g. the name of a student, his or her specialty, academic year; employer's name, occupation, institution, the main activity of that institution).
- After the introductory training, the committee will once more review the issues scheduled for the first day of the site visit and interview questions will be allocated to its members. A leader and recorder will be appointed for all interviews.
- The coordinator or Assistant Advisor of EKKA will prepare badges and tabletop signs with full names but without titles for all committee members. "Esimees" or "Chair" is added to the name of the committee's chairperson only.
- To save time, committee members do not introduce themselves at the beginning of an interview (except at the introductory meeting). The coordinator will notify the contact person of the higher education institution of this and request that everyone read the CVs of committee members on EKKA's website and, if possible, that the contact person make the CVs available on site as well (e.g. at the table or on the wall in front of the interview room).
- A site visit begins with a 20-minute introductory meeting where committee members as well as compilers of the self-evaluation report will be present. The chairperson of the committee will introduce the objective and schedule for the visit. Committee members will introduce themselves.
- No more than six interviewees participate in a single interview.
- Committee members may split up for separate interviews, i.e. there may be parallel interviews, but there must be at least two committee members present at each interview.
- The duration of interviews is 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the number of questions and interviewees.
- All interviews are recorded on a Dictaphone if the interviewees agree to this — the coordinator will ask for their consent at the beginning of each interview.
- Each interview will be followed by a 10-minute break. After roughly 1.5 hours the committee takes a longer reflection period (preferably combined with a coffee break, lunch, or examining documents).
- Representatives of a higher education institution do not participate in lunches or dinners. Coffee and lunches are preferably served in either the committee's work room or another separate room where committee members can have discussions without being disturbed. EKKA will pay for the catering of experts.
- At the end of a site visit, initial findings ( i.e. strengths and areas for improvement of the higher education institution which were agreed upon by all committee members) will be introduced to the top executive (rector, director) of the educational institution; if necessary, any open-ended issues can be clarified during this meeting (20–30 minutes). The chairperson of the committee also presents a similar summary to the higher education institution staff (20 minutes). These summary meetings are preceded by at least two-hour discussion periods, of which 45 minutes can be left for the so-called "open house" when

representatives of the membership of a higher education institutions may come and talk about issues they either did not have time to discuss or could not talk about during formal meetings.

- Committee members are not allowed to accept gifts from higher education institutions.

#### 2.2.4. Assessment Reports

- EKKA has developed assessment form templates for all key activities which are made available in electronic format on EKKA's website and registered in the documentation management system.
- Process managers of key activities will be responsible for the review and revision of assessment forms. After having modified an assessment form, they will send it to the Assistant Advisor of EKKA who will then forward it to the Quality Manager for registration in the documentation management system. The Director of EKKA must approve the assessment form before it is registered in the document management system.

- The structure of assessment forms is built on the following principles:  
The form starts with a summary of the most important conclusions by assessment area, including assessment decisions (in the case of conformity assessments), commendations (see the *Form for Institutional Accreditation*) and recommendations .

If experts make different assessment decisions, each of them has an obligation to justify that decision.

Evaluation criteria or standards are presented in separate cells. Next to each criterion experts present their analysis: the most important conclusions depending on the type of evaluation (decisions, commendations, recommendations, shortcomings); the arguments that have led them to those conclusions; and evidence to substantiate their claims.

- An EKKA electronic evaluation platform has been developed for quality assessment of study programme groups (Information Manager, Liia Tüür, coordinates its continuing development).
- To ensure uniform quality of assessment reports, a representative of the EKKA Bureau (coordinator or evaluation expert) will support and supervise assessment committees throughout the drafting process. The role of representatives of the EKKA Bureau is formalised in the relevant evaluation regulation.
- Process managers of key activities or the Director of EKKA will provide feedback on draft reports of assessment committees, being entitled to suggest corrections to the style and language of reports and the elimination of obvious inaccuracies.
- EKKA will not interfere with committees' substantive assessments.
- Educational institutions have opportunities to submit clarifying comments regarding assessment reports, which committees must study carefully. Draft reports, sent to educational institutions for comment by the coordinator (in the case of institutional accreditation) or the Evaluation Expert of EKKA (in the case of quality assessment of study programme groups, accreditation of vocational education and training, and initial assessment of study programme groups), will not include the committees' final decisions but only descriptions of strengths and areas for improvement.
- After a committee has reviewed the comments by a higher education institution and included them in its decision-making in justified cases, the chairperson of the committee will coordinate the final assessment

report with committee members and send an agreed version to the EKKA coordinator or evaluation expert by email, confirming that this is the final version of the assessment report.

- Assessment reports that are forwarded to the EKKA Quality Assessment Council, should always express committees' unified positions, i.e. were adopted by consensus (or, in exceptional cases, by reasoned dissenting views). Dissenting views (if any) accompanied by their reasons will be included in assessment reports.
- In the case of conformity assessments, when the Quality Assessment Council finds that there are contradictions in a report or that it is not adequately justified, the Council may return the report to the assessment committee to be reviewed and clarified.

### **2.2.5. Decisions by the Quality Assessment Council**

- Members of the Quality Assessment Council can access session materials in the document management programme at least one week before its session, including institutional self-evaluation reports, committees' draft assessment reports, comments to the draft reports by educational institutions, committees' final reports and appropriate additional information (feedback on the evaluation period from educational institutions and experts; background information that was also available to educational institutions in the process of self-analysis, etc.)
- Conflicts of interest are prevented when making decisions: a member of the Quality Assessment Council who is affiliated with the educational institution under evaluation will leave the room during the time of discussion.
- The Quality Assessment Council will base its decisions on: strengths and areas for improvement of educational institutions identified by assessment reports (quality assessment of study programme groups); committees' component assessments (institutional accreditation); accreditation decisions (accreditation of vocational education and training); or assessments regarding the conformity of the quality of instruction to required standards (initial assessment of study programme group).
- The EKKA Quality Assessment Council will interpret assessment reports and adopt the subsequent decisions in a consistent manner, making similar decisions under comparable circumstances. It is therefore mandatory for assessment committees to justify their decisions and, if needed, to identify essential areas for improvement.

### **2.2.6. Notifying Educational Institutions of Assessment Decisions**

- Before making assessment decisions public, EKKA will notify the relevant educational institution of an assessment decision by email, attaching the text of a press release (if applicable) and information on the expected time of final approval of the minutes by the Quality Assessment Council.
- To introduce institutional accreditation decisions and to discuss areas identified for improvement, EKKA offers educational institutions the opportunity to meet the chairperson of the Quality Assessment Council (or a member of the Council delegated by the chairperson), the Director of EKKA and the coordinator of an assessment committee. When adopting a decision, the Quality Assessment Council decides who will present that decision to the educational institution

concerned. The coordinator will send a proposed time and place for the meeting to the higher education institution along with the minutes recording the decision and the final assessment report. The coordinator will also ask whether the higher education institution agrees to the publication of its self-evaluation report in full on the EKKA website or if it wishes to reduce the volume of details in its report.

- In the case of quality assessment of study programme groups, accreditation of vocational education and training, and initial assessment of study programme groups — the secretary of the relevant quality assessment council will send the minutes recording the decision and the assessment report (or a hyperlink pointing to it) to the appropriate educational institution. The educational institution may invite the chairperson or a member of the Quality Assessment Council, the Director of EKKA, and the coordinator or the relevant process manager, to the school to discuss the areas for improvement identified by the decision; or to agree on the time for discussion in EKKA.

### 2.2.7. Challenging

- Institutions under evaluation have the right to submit comments about assessment reports before their final approvals, which the assessment committees will take into account, when justified, and which will also be made available to the EKKA Quality Assessment Council before it makes its decision.
- EKKA has introduced an appeals procedure for all external evaluation processes, the nature of which depends on the outcome of the concrete process.
- . In cases of evaluation processes where the EKKA Quality Assessment Council makes final administrative decisions (institutional accreditation and quality assessment of SPGs), all EKKA's procedures and/or decisions may be challenged by filing a challenge with the Council. Final decisions by the Council can also be challenged/appealed in the courts.
- In case of re-evaluation of study program groups where the EKKA Quality Assessment Council's decision results in a proposal to the Minister of Education and Research, the procedures conducted by EKKA may be challenged by filing a challenge to the Management Board of Foundation Archimedes. The final assessment by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council may be disputed after adoption of the corresponding administrative decision by the Minister
- In the case of initial assessment of SPGs where the EKKA Quality Assessment Council acts solely as an expert body, a possibility is provided for persons concerned to file an appropriate request for explanation or memorandum to Director of EKKA and then to the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation if he or she has a doubt that EKKA or an assessment committee has not followed the rules described in the *Guidelines for Initial Assessment of Study program Groups* when organising and conducting an expert analysis. EKKA's appeals procedure is detailed in EKKA's evaluation regulations which are publicly available on the EKKA website.



## 2.3. Review, Feedback and Revision of Key Activities

### 2.3.1. Formats for Review

The review of EKKK key activities is performed on several levels: regular meetings of the EKKK Bureau, EKKK development seminars twice a year, discussions at the EKKK Quality Assessment Council, annual reports to the Supervisory Board of the Archimedes Foundation, and summary analyses of evaluation periods. Reviews are based on analyses of various feedback surveys, suggestions by experts and educational institutions under evaluation, examples of best practices in the world, subject-related publications, changes in the environment and legislation, etc.

### 2.3.2. Feedback on Assessment Visits

EKKK requests feedback from higher education institutions and vocational education institutions after each assessment visit.

- Process managers of key activities, in cooperation with the Information Manager, will prepare questionnaires, taking into consideration the specifics of a particular evaluation. The Information Manager will ensure that questionnaires for different evaluations would not differ from one another unnecessarily. If needed, the Information Manager will call all process managers together to harmonise the questionnaires.
- Questions address the following sets of topics: the composition of a committee, thoroughness of committee preparation, relevance of questions asked, use of interview time, atmosphere of an interview, and the interviewees' opportunities to express their opinions. Questionnaires allow one to explain his or her answers and make suggestions to improve the evaluation process. The questionnaires of all evaluations share a similar structure and a four-point rating scale.
- No later than five working days after a site visit, the assistant/coordinator of an assessment committee will (by requesting the relevant link from the Information Manager of EKKK) send an electronic questionnaire to all educational institution members who met with the assessment committee, with a request to respond within five working days; to ensure that feedback on the committee's work would be received before EKKK sends the draft assessment forms to the educational institution.
- The Information Manager will save the feedback and an analysis of its results on both the LimeSurvey account and EKKK's server. The analysis is prepared by the Information Manager.
- Educational institutions will receive summaries of feedback they had provided on assessment visits.

### 2.3.3. Expert Feedback

- Process managers of key activities, in cooperation with the Information Manager, will prepare the questionnaires, taking into consideration the specifics of a particular evaluation. The Information Manager will ensure that questionnaires of different evaluations would not differ from one another unnecessarily. If needed, the Information Manager will call all process managers together to harmonise the questionnaires.
- Questions address the following sets of topics: feedback on the preparation of the assessment process (training, assessment forms, evaluation

criteria), the organisation of work of the committee, and inputs by the chairperson and other members. Committee members may make suggestions for improving the evaluation process. Chairpersons are requested to provide feedback on inputs by other committee members.

- In the case of institutional accreditation, quality assessment and initial assessment of study programme groups, and re-evaluation (except when one committee evaluates study programme groups of several higher education institutions during the same evaluation period); the coordinator/assistant will send an electronic questionnaire to experts immediately after sending a draft assessment report to the higher education institution.
- In the case of accreditation of vocational education and training, the Information Manager will request feedback from all members of assessment committees and assistants at the end of evaluation periods but before the decisions by the Quality Assessment Council have been adopted.
- The Information Manager will save expert feedback on the LimeSurvey account, EKKA's server and in the EKKA expert database — T:\EKKA\EKKA\_kaustad\Eksperdid.
- After the Quality Assessment Council has adopted its decision, the experts will receive feedback on the feedback they had provided.
- If an expert participates in several committees during the same evaluation period and feedback received on assessment visits contains criticism, the process manager or coordinator will intervene during the evaluation period depending on the nature of the feedback received.

#### **2.3.4. Analysis of Feedback Results and Discussion of Suggestions for Revisions**

- The Information Manager of EKKA will prepare summaries of electronic surveys and charts showing comparisons with previous periods twice a year, i.e. at the end of each evaluation period.
- We will summarise the feedback on experts (feedback from educational institutions on assessment visits, feedback from committee members and feedback from coordinators) at the end of each evaluation period and then decide on the future use of each expert. The Information Manager will make a relevant note in our expert database regarding that decision.
- Feedback summaries and suggestions for revisions are discussed at EKKA meetings and changes are introduced as needed. The Information Manager will take minutes of discussions and save them on the EKKA server T:\EKKA\EKKA\_kaustad\Tagasiside.
- The Director of EKKA will also introduce feedback summaries and planned changes based on these summaries, in sessions of quality assessment councils.

#### **2.3.5. Feedback from Educational Institutions on the Entire Process**

EKKA requests feedback from educational institutions on the entire process including both self-evaluation and evaluation.

- Process managers of key activities, in cooperation with the Information Manager, will prepare the questionnaires, taking into consideration the specifics of a particular evaluation. The Information Manager will ensure that questionnaires of different evaluations would not

differ from one another unnecessarily. If needed, the Information Manager will call all process managers together to harmonise the questionnaires.

- The timing of surveys depends on the specifics of an evaluation, but the sets of topics for different evaluations are similar.
- In the case of institutional accreditation and initial assessment of study programme groups, the coordinator will request feedback from higher education institutions (administration, contact person, members of the steering team for self-evaluation, etc.) within ten working days after the Quality Assessment Council has adopted its decision. If a higher education institution wants to discuss the evaluation results and report with the Director of EKKA, the chairman of the Quality Assessment Council and the coordinator, EKKA will request feedback from that higher education institution during the discussion, applying the method of a focus group interview.
- In the case of re-evaluations and quality assessments of study programme groups, the Information Manager will send questionnaires to higher education institutions at the ends of the evaluation periods, after the Quality Assessment Council has adopted its decisions.
- In the case of accreditation of vocational education and training, the Information Manager will send questionnaires to educational institutions at least once within each two years.

### 2.3.6. Impact Assessment During Follow-up

- Process managers of key activities regularly organise seminars for higher education institutions during which those who have undergone an evaluation will introduce activities planned on the basis of recommendations they received and areas for improvement identified, along with the results thereof; they will also provide EKKA with feedback on the evaluation process and its impact. The process manager of the relevant key activity will prepare a memorandum where he or she outlines 1) evidence of changes that had occurred in higher education institutions as a result of the evaluation and 2) suggestions to EKKA for improving the evaluation process.
- As a result of institutional accreditation, the EKKA Quality Assessment Council will adopt administrative decisions, and may also impose secondary conditions on its accreditation decisions regarding higher education institutions. If the Quality Assessment Council has imposed a secondary condition on its decision, a subsequent follow-up procedure will take place during the following three years, during which the EKKA Quality Assessment Council will evaluate developments in that area.
- In the case of institutional accreditation and initial assessment of study programme groups, the EKKA Quality Assessment Council may decide that the aspects under evaluation conform only partially to required standards, and a re-evaluation will therefore be undertaken within a shorter period of time. Also, regarding quality assessment of study programme groups, in the case of certain major non-conformities and based on a decision by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council, subsequent reviews may be conducted within a shorter period of time. In the course of re-evaluations, assessment committees will examine how higher education institutions have addressed the deficiencies and which improvement activities they have implemented.

### 2.3.7. Summary Analyses of Evaluation Periods

- In addition to feedback summaries regarding shorter evaluation periods, EKKA will also analyse feedback trends. In the case of institutional

accreditation, EKKK will prepare analytical overviews of results and areas for improvement for up to a three-year evaluation period.

- In the case of quality assessment of study programme groups and accreditation of study programme groups in vocational education and training, the process manager of the relevant key activity, in cooperation with members of assessment committees, will prepare an overview outlining the strengths and areas for improvement for the entire study programme group, as well as the feedback on the evaluation process.
- EKKK suggests topics for student final papers related to external evaluation, and for research on the impact of external evaluation as a topic for a doctoral thesis. EKKK employees are prepared to be co-supervisors or consultants.

### 2.3.8. Reporting

- Once a year — while reviewing EKKK's development plan — the process managers of key activities prepare overviews of the evaluations conducted within a year, and of their results; feedback on the evaluation process (received during follow-up activities); and identify changes that were based on that feedback, along with evidence of the impact of the evaluations. Based on these overviews, the Information Manager of EKKK will prepare an EKKK annual report which will then be discussed in EKKK quality assessment councils. After the reports have been approved they will be publicised on the EKKK website.
- The Director of EKKK submits an activity report to the Supervisory Board of the Archimedes Foundation on a quarterly basis, and annual activity and financial reports for the previous calendar year at the beginning of each calendar year.

## 2.4. Introduction of Changes

Introduction of changes to existing regulations and procedures will occur as needed and according to the review results. See also 2.3.1.

# 3. Communication

## 3.1. Communication of the Evaluation Process and Evaluation Results to the General Public



### 3.2. Notifying Target Groups

An EKKK partner list has been created which includes vice rectors, heads of academic affairs, quality managers and others from all higher education institutions, to better inform the representatives of higher education institutions. Vocational education and training newsletters and the vocational education institution list are used to inform vocational education institutions.

The same model as above is used in distributing assessment decisions as well as other EKKK news — news for website(s), press releases if appropriate, messages to the partner list and newsletters (e.g. vocational education and training newsletters).

### 3.3. Replying to Inquiries

The Assistant Advisor forwards the inquiries received at the EKKK general email address [ekka@archimedes.ee](mailto:ekka@archimedes.ee) to EKKK employees or replies to them himself or herself. Responses will be carbon copied to the EKKK inbox, where they will be stored.

### 3.4. Marketing Communications

Website management, development and modernisation.

The EKKK website development is based on a target-group-oriented approach — specifying higher education institutions, vocational education institutions, students, and assessors. The latest information, e.g. news, evaluation summaries, is also added to Archimedes' main website.

The Information Manager prepares analyses regarding EKKK website users at least twice a year using the Google Analytics software. Summaries of those analyses will be saved on EKKK's server. Analyses will be discussed at EKKK meetings. If necessary, the Information Manager will make changes to the content management.

Distribution of information publications.

Information publications are distributed during EKKK trainings to personnel of higher education institutions and vocational education institutions as well as experts, seminars, conferences and education fairs, e.g. *Teeviit* and *Intellektika*.

Media monitoring

*ETA Monitoring* company services are used for media monitoring. The Information Manager periodically saves articles on the EKKK server. Media monitoring is discussed at EKKK meetings. Articles are designed to be published in extra editions of daily newspapers on education and

training. The Information Manager manages information about the timing of publication for those extra editions and he or she coordinates the preparation and publication of articles.

#### 3.5. Internal Communications

##### Experts' electronic platforms

EKKA uses the following electronic platforms as experts' work environments:

- The cooperation platform using the Dropbox freeware ([www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com))
- In collaboration with the Estonian Information Technology Foundation, EKKA has developed an electronic evaluation platform that enables higher education institutions to prepare their self-evaluation reports and experts to produce their assessment reports ([www.e-ope.ee/ekka](http://www.e-ope.ee/ekka))

##### Internal communications

Internal communications take place at EKKA meetings. Information shared at meetings will be saved on the EKKA server.

EKKA staff share an MS Outlook Group Calendar.

On the Archimedes Foundation level: The Information Manager of EKKA participates in a Communications working group formed by the Archimedes Foundation and led by the information manager of Archimedes. The purpose of the working group is to unify communications procedures at Archimedes and share the best practices in the field. The information manager of Archimedes will convene the Communications working group at least once a quarter. Minutes of the working group meetings are recorded by members on a rotating basis; the minutes will then be registered and publicised for the Archimedes staff using Webdesktop, a document management system. The responsibility within units for communicating decisions made by the working group lies with unit representatives.

