

Decisions Regarding the Assessments of the Internal Security and the Business and Administration Study Programme Groups

Estonian Academy of Security Sciences

11/11/2016

**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 assessments of the Internal
Security and the Business and Administration study
programme groups in the first and second cycles of higher
education at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences in
seven years**

On the basis of subsection 21¹ (2) of the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act, point 3.7.3 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 3.7.1 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 the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct quality assessments of the study programme groups.
2. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 7.07.2016, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Internal Security and the Business and Administration study programme groups in the first and second cycles of higher education at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Robin Bryant (Chair)	Professor, Canterbury Christ Church University; UK
Häli Allas	Planning Division of Rescue Work Department, Ministry of the Interior; Estonia
Kätlin Alvela	Head of the Prevention and Offences Proceedings Bureau, Police and Border Guard Board; Estonia
Natalja Gurviš	Associate Professor, Tallinn University of Technology; Estonia
Liina Hirv	Student, University of Tartu; Estonia

Raini Jõks	Governor, Tartu Prison; Estonia
Hannu Kiehelä	Director, Training Institute of Prison and Probation Services; Finland
Valdas Krulikauskas	Chief, Fire Fighters Training School of the Fire and Rescue Department, Ministry of the Interior; Lithuania
Daiga Kupcane	Chief, Education Coordination Section, State Border Guard College; Latvia
Anneli Külaots	Counsellor to the Deputy Director General, Estonian Emergency Response Centre; Estonia

3. Under the **Internal Security study programme group**, the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences submitted the following programmes for evaluation:

Police Service (Prof HE)

Rescue Service (Prof HE)

Corrections (Prof HE)

Internal Security (MA)

Under the **Business and Administration study programme group**, the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences submitted the following programmes for evaluation:

Taxation and Customs (Prof HE)

Customs and Taxation (Prof HE)

The assessment was carried out along with accreditation of the Protection of Property and Persons curriculum group of vocational education, evaluating the following curricula of vocational education:

Border Guard Officer

Patrol Police Officer

Rescuer

Rescuer Unit Leader

Dispatcher

Prison Officer

4. The Estonian Academy of Security Sciences submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 22.06.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 5.07.2016.
5. An assessment visit was made to the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences during 20–22.09.2016.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 11.10.2016, EKKA forwarded it to the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences for its comments on 12.10.2016 and the Academy delivered its response on 21.10.2016.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 25.10.2016. 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 Academy's self-evaluation report to the Council members on 25.10.2016.

9. The Council with 11 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 11.11.2016 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Internal Security and the Business and Administration study programme groups in the first and second cycles of higher education at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences.

Assessment at the Level of the Study Programme Group

Strengths

- 1) Students are highly motivated and committed, and are willing and able to provide feedback. The students have a clear understanding of what knowledge and skills they wish to acquire, and which further learning and career opportunities are available.
- 2) Teaching staff have recent and relevant practical experience in the areas they teach.
- 3) Teaching resources are excellent (e.g. simulators, equipment and e-learning tools).
- 4) A strength of these study programmes is the efficient cooperation with various agencies who often make development proposals.
- 5) The current e-learning system functions well, and the arrangements for internships are innovative and effective.
- 6) The introduction of distance learning and implementation of in-service trainings for border guards, police officers and other professionals are important developments.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The strategy for recruiting more students to the Academy with proficiency in foreign languages, especially English and Russian, must be reviewed. Foreign language learning and specialisation courses must continue to be integrated.
- 2) Teaching staff are not sufficiently aware of the staff development strategy at the Academy.
- 3) Teaching staff are not always sufficiently involved in the process of study programme development (e.g. in the early stages of designing a new integrated programme).
- 4) Software for detecting plagiarism is only available for texts written in Estonian but not for texts in English or Russian. Policies for academic misdemeanours and plagiarism must be revised, and communicated to all teaching staff and others involved in student assessments.
- 5) Equitable terms should be established across all programmes with regard to funding accommodations, sustenance and other support services for students.
- 6) The workload distribution among teaching staff should be more fair and more transparent, particularly regarding the research-to-teaching ratios and opportunities for in-service trainings.
- 7) The Academy should increase the number of full-text articles of online journals that are available to its staff and students.
- 8) Staff should be better informed about the consolidating of teaching and learning on a smaller number of sites.

Assessment at the Study Programme Level

POLICE SERVICE (Prof HE)

Strengths

- 1) Development of the study programme is dynamic and innovative and based on changes in the Academy and the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB), and on feedback gathered from alumni, employers, learners and teaching staff. The structure of the programme is consistent with the main functions and competencies of the PBGB. The programme is continuously

- updated according to the real situation in the field of security.
- 2) Study programmes in the area of police and border guard education correspond well to the Academy's main objectives and its development activities.
 - 3) Employers are closely involved in the process of developing, updating and implementing the programme (e.g. in choosing topics for graduation theses, in participating in examination and defence committees).
 - 4) The organisation of internships is excellent, well structured and monitored. Internships are implemented and supervised in collaboration with the PBGB in various regions in Estonia.
 - 5) Specialisation courses and foreign language learning are well integrated.
 - 6) Student feedback is consistently taken into account while developing the programme, for example, a practical component has been added to the final examination as a result.
 - 7) The same kind of equipment is used in teaching and learning that is used by the PBGB in their daily work.
 - 8) Students get financial support.
 - 9) Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected. Since more than 50% of teaching and learning consists of practical tasks and internships, a large proportion of practical classes are carried out in smaller groups and thus the teaching staff have more time for each cadet. Many practical examples are used in teaching. An example of good practice is the involvement of practitioners from the PBGB in the teaching.
 - 10) Students are early and effectively assimilated into the police organisation. The studies include joint activities with the PBGB, such as work in police patrols and other professional training.
 - 11) Teaching staff participate in various projects to develop required teaching materials (e.g. glossaries). Teaching staff have developed good quality e-learning courses and learning materials for Moodle.
 - 12) Students are highly motivated to work with the Police and Border Guard Board after graduation. Students have a clear overview of potential career opportunities. Every graduate of the Police Service programme is ensured a position at the Police and Border Guard Board.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) It is necessary to increase both staff's and students' awareness of the foreign language courses currently offered and to make language learning more flexible.
- 2) The international component of the study programme must be strengthened by involving more international lecturers and by facilitating student participation in Erasmus programmes. Opportunities for longer-term international mobility should be created within the study programme.
- 3) There is insufficient new professional literature in some areas (police tactics) and learning materials (vehicle check).
- 4) The Police and Border Guard Board should support the Academy with additional teaching resources and equipment for police, border guard and criminalistics education.
- 5) The e-learning courses and learning materials should be developed in cooperation with specialists from the PBGB and be also made available on the PBGB intranet.
- 6) There could be greater rotation of teaching staff with the Police and Border Guard Board.
- 7) Teaching staff should be more active to keep abreast of latest developments in their subject areas (e.g. through scholarship programmes).
- 8) Student involvement in research has been irregular. It is recommended that the Academy organise scientific conferences for students and invite both students and master's students from other security specialisations to make presentations. The best papers presented could be used in the future as training materials.
- 9) Teaching staff must be motivated to undertake research (applied research), participate in international conferences in their fields and publish articles in recognised scientific journals.

RESCUE SERVICE (Prof HE)

Strengths

- 1) The quality of the study programme is ensured by close collaboration among the Rescue Board, Emergency Response Centre, teaching staff and students, who all are represented in the Rescue College Council. Employers' requests are taken into account while developing the study programme.
- 2) The learning environment is modern, and support structures (libraries, dormitories, catering, etc.) have received mainly positive feedback from students. Internship opportunities are good.
- 3) Modern technologies are used in teaching, for example, a virtual simulation environment. Especially good conditions are created for developing effective operational management skills.
- 4) Graduates of the programme consider the atmosphere at the Rescue College to be very positive and conducive to learning.
- 5) Teaching staff cooperate with colleagues from other colleges of the Academy. Due to participation in joint courses, workgroups and research groups, the teaching staffs of different departments are well informed about the nature and results of activities by their colleagues.
- 6) Teaching staff at the Rescue College is highly qualified with extensive experience. Non-staff experts from the Rescue Board and Emergency Response Centre, who are abreast of the latest developments in the field, are also involved in teaching. Teaching staff improve their professional competencies at various educational institutions both in Estonia and abroad, including in the United Kingdom, Denmark and Finland. Employers are highly appreciative of teaching staff at the Rescue College.
- 7) In comparison with other Estonian educational institutions, the students of the Academy have particularly good learning conditions (accommodation, clothing, scholarships) and are guaranteed jobs after graduation.
- 8) Teaching staff of the Rescue Service programme are satisfied with the opportunities offered for their professional self-development and research.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) A possibility should be sought to conduct all elective courses of the programme within the standard period of study, in cooperation with other institutions of higher education (e.g. Tallinn University of Technology), if needed.
- 2) Equipment in the fire safety laboratory needs to be updated.
- 3) A significant number of students do not complete their studies within the standard period, primarily due to not submitting their theses on time. The stages of thesis writing and the courses related to research methodology should be better synchronised. The length of the internship period during the final year should be also reviewed.
- 4) It should be ensured that the objectives of internships are achieved by all cadets.
- 5) Competition for the specialities offered by the Rescue College is weak. The reasons for the insufficient numbers of applicants should be analysed, and consideration given to ways of making these specialities more attractive to potential candidates. The recruitment process could be carried out with a closer cooperation between employers and the Rescue College.

CORRECTIONS (Prof HE)

Strengths

- 1) There is very good cooperation between the Academy's College of Justice and the Prison Service, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice. Employer representatives are

involved in developing the study programme and learning environment, assessing the students and publishing textbooks.

- 2) A wide range of equipment used in daily work at prisons is utilised in teaching. This enables effective practical learning.
- 3) A number of different teaching and learning methods are used, including visits to institutions relating to the specialty.
- 4) Monthly meetings are held to ensure efficient communication between the teaching staff and students and to promote discipline, including the issue of academic fraud.
- 5) Due to internship coordinators, practical training in prisons is well prepared, structured and implemented. Practical and theoretical studies are well integrated.
- 6) Student satisfaction with the study programme is high.
- 7) A majority of the staff and non-staff lecturers are also active as professional practitioners.
- 8) Interviews are conducted with students who have withdrawn from studies, providing the College with important information.
- 9) The system of group leaders and group coordinators provides an efficient way to organise the study process.
- 10) Students who had service relationships with the Prison Service receive salaries during their studies even though their employment is suspended for those study periods. Other students are paid scholarships. An additional scholarship is available for good academic performance.
- 11) Employers are very satisfied with graduates' professional qualifications.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) In addition to steps already taken to develop students' generic skills, extra attention should be given to enhancing their legal knowledge.
- 2) There is a lack of relevant professional literature and teaching materials in some subjects that are in accordance with the legal system and with the organisation of prisons in Estonia.
- 3) Distance learning should be kept in mind as a potential form of study.
- 4) Assessment criteria for the final examination should be more clearly worded. It should be determined why the subsection of law in the final examination is difficult for students, and whether the teaching methods used are suitable.
- 5) At present e-learning tools are not created for all modules.
- 6) Newly appointed members of the teaching staff should be made aware of opportunities to improve their teaching skills.
- 7) The percentage of students who withdraw from studies is relatively high. The reasons for this should be identified and measures taken to reduce the number of dropouts.

INTERNAL SECURITY (MA)

Strengths

- 1) Admissions of students with different backgrounds (not only from the security discipline) to the programme has enriched the teaching and learning process with new perspectives.
- 2) Student theses are of great practical value to state administrative agencies.
- 3) The study programme is up to date and its implementation is flexible. The programme has a high reputation both nationally and internationally.
- 4) The teaching staff are highly qualified. They are very active in both their professional and academic development, including engagement in doctoral studies.
- 5) E-learning is particularly well used. The 3-D virtual technology system is innovative and effectively employed. The teaching methods used are highly appreciated by the students.
- 6) There is a close cooperation with state administrative agencies.

- 7) Teaching staff provide students with clear, comprehensive and supportive feedback. The counselling system works well.
- 8) Teaching staff have good national and international contacts for research and for disseminating applied knowledge regarding internal security.
- 9) Employers are satisfied with the professional qualifications of graduates.
- 10) The organisation of studies is flexible and takes into account the specifics of the speciality.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Sufficient time must be allocated for the Research Methodology course and the quantitative methods must be adequately covered within the course.
- 2) The study programme should offer more elective courses, for example, on counterterrorism, cultural differences and national defence. It is advisable to make the Crisis Management module compulsory.
- 3) More cooperation with employers is needed when identifying topics for student research and assessing the impacts of such research.
- 4) Student counselling before entry should be enhanced with regard to their workloads and the commitments required. Students find it difficult to reconcile their work with their studies. In collaboration with employers, an appropriate balance should be sought.
- 5) The availability of speciality-related software should be increased (e.g. for data analysis).
- 6) Within the framework of the programme, it is advisable to compile teaching materials of the speciality in the Estonian language.
- 7) The 'two supervisor' system is not always properly implemented. It must be ensured that all students have one supervisor from outside of the Academy.
- 8) Given the security risks to Estonia and the country's broad-based approach to security, international partners should be included in the teaching process. It is advisable to promote international student mobility.
- 9) More practitioners should be included in the teaching process.
- 10) Students should be offered more opportunities to participate in scientific conferences.

TAXATION AND CUSTOMS (Prof HE); CUSTOMS AND TAXATIONS (Prof HE)

Strengths

- 1) The efficient and flexible programme management in collaboration with the Tax and Customs Board is reflected in recent changes to the programme (including the name change for the programme to 'Customs and Taxations') which allow specialisation in both taxation and customs. Programme managers have clear plans for this development.
- 2) The feedback system is well developed.
- 3) The content and structure of the new programme also enable students to work in the private sector.
- 4) Methodological resources are regularly updated. E-learning materials and methods are actively developed and implemented.
- 5) Modern accounting software is used. A digital simulation platform is currently being developed. There is a well-equipped special library.
- 6) Theory and practice are well integrated in the teaching. In cooperation with the Tax and Customs Board and the private sector, students are offered good internship opportunities.
- 7) Teaching staff provide students with comprehensive support throughout their studies. Close collaboration between teaching staff and students ensures good quality of thesis supervision.
- 8) Teaching staff have broad-based practical experience and they also organise in-service trainings outside of the Academy.
- 9) Teaching staff are active in compiling and publishing textbooks.

- 10) Research and publications by the teaching staff are directly related to the study programme. Staff members have published articles in international research journals.
- 11) Teaching staff are provided with regular feedback on their performance in teaching, research, development and administrative activities.
- 12) The numbers of both applicants and graduates are high.
- 13) There is a student-friendly atmosphere at the Financial College. Students are highly motivated throughout the study process. Intended learning outcomes and study plans meet students' expectations.

Areas for improvements and recommendations

- 1) With regard to research and development activities by the teaching staff, there should be closer collaboration with other institutions of higher education and colleges of the Academy. More cooperation with the Tax and Customs Board is needed in applied research.
- 2) The quality of teaching of generic skills and foreign language skills should be improved.
- 3) It is necessary to acquire access to a larger number of scientific databases (e.g. Wiley, Web of Science, Thomson Reuters).
- 4) It is advisable to involve a larger number of international lecturers in the teaching (especially in the case of international topics).
- 5) More self-defence courses should be offered to students specialising in customs.
- 6) Large teaching workloads make it difficult for teaching staff to find time for self-development and research. Motivation of the teaching staff to undertake research should be increased and more opportunities for research ensured. The requirements for undertaking research should be made clearer and more transparent.
- 7) Visiting lecturers should be better supported in developing syllabi and choosing teaching methods.
- 8) It is advisable to cooperate more closely with the Tax and Customs Board when choosing visiting lecturers and identifying topics for theses.
- 9) Students' research activity and international mobility should be increased. The credit transfer system is currently not flexible enough.
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, and

DEC IDED

To approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Internal Security study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences in seven years.

The decision was adopted by 11 votes in favour. Against 0.

To approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Business and Administration study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences in seven years.

The decision was adopted by 11 votes in favour. Against 0.

- 12.** The Bureau of EKKA will coordinate a date for the next quality assessment of these study programme groups with the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences no later than 11.02.2023.
- 13.** The Council proposes that the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences will submit an action plan to EKKA with regard to the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the report no later than 11.11.2017.
- 14.** 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