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

Explanatory Memorandum

Legislative background

Based on the Universities Act, Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act and Private Schools Act, the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA') has the obligation to develop terms and procedures for the quality assessment of study programme groups (hereinafter referred to as 'quality assessment of SPGs'). The above-listed Acts define the quality assessment of study programme groups as an external evaluation which assesses the compliance of study programmes, their delivery and instruction-related development activities – measured against legislation, as well as national and international standards and trends, with the aim to provide recommendations for improving the quality of instruction.

Higher education institutions have an obligation to ensure that the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency or a competent foreign quality assurance agency approved by EKKA assesses the quality of their study programme groups at least once in seven years, or in a shorter period of time as decided by the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency. The costs related to quality assessment of study programme groups shall be borne by the state budget or, at the request of the higher education institution, through its own budget. If a higher education institution applies for the quality assessment of its study programme group to be conducted by a foreign quality assurance agency, costs thereof shall be borne by the state budget to the extent and in the amount of the expenditures actually incurred, and that do not exceed the costs of nationally conducted quality assessments of study programme groups.

Appendix 1 to this Explanatory Memorandum includes a comparison of different types of external quality evaluations relating to higher education institutions.

This document describes the procedure for quality assessment of SPGs in the first and second cycles of higher education (professional higher education, ProfHE; bachelor degree studies, BA; master degree studies, MA; and integrated study programmes of bachelor and master degree studies, INT). There is an intention to combine the quality assessment of doctoral studies with the evaluation of research and development, and the respective discussions have already started.

Overview of the development process of the regulation

As a result of the transitional evaluation, conducted over the period 2009–2011, higher education institutions were granted the right to conduct studies under their study programme groups, and first quality assessments should take place in seven years from the date the right was granted – thus, no later than in 2017. In view of the supportive and developing (not controlling) nature of quality assessment of SPGs, it is a right rather than obligation for higher education institutions to undergo the assessment; therefore, it is appropriate to request it earlier. Another reason for producing the regulation as early as spring 2012 is related to a planned international review of the ICT Programme, because it is practical to tie this review to the quality assessment of SPGs. According to the initial plans, a preliminary quality assessment of SPGs will be undertaken in late autumn 2012 in the Informatics and Information Technology study programme group at the University of Tartu and Tallinn University of Technology.

During the preparatory phase of developing the regulation, EKKA conducted seven focus group interviews in January this year: one with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council, three with employers (including one specifically with employers in the field of ICT), two with study programme managers, and one with students. One focus group included five to nine interviewees. Interviews were conducted by Hillar Bauman and Maiki Udam. Responses were coded and analysed with the NVivo 9

software. A summary of focus group interviews is available on the EKKA website, http://ekka.archimedes.ee/files/OKR_intervjuude_kokkuvote.pdf.

Also, EKKA sent to heads of academic affairs of all higher education institutions a call to provide opinions on how study programme groups should be evaluated, and by whom. 15 higher education institutions replied (listed in order of received responses): Estonian Maritime Academy, Estonian Information Technology College, Tallinn Health Care College, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, Estonian Aviation Academy, Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary, Tallinn University, Estonian Academy of Arts, Tartu Health Care College, Tartu Art College, Estonian National Defence College, Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonian University of Life Sciences, University of Tartu.

The focus group interviews and feedback from heads of academic affairs were analysed by a content team, including Maiki Udam (EKKA) , Hillar Bauman (EKKA), Lagle Zobel (EKKA), Mart Noorma (University of Tartu), Aune Valk (Ministry of Education and Research), who, based on that information, prepared the initial principles to be used in quality assessment of SPGs, and a draft for preparing self-analyses of study programmes. As a basis for developing a format for self-evaluations of study programmes, the content team used the self-evaluation form used by the University of Tartu, and Margit Raudsepp (University of Tartu) was included as a consultant in the team. Siret Rutiku (University of Tartu) gave feedback on draft versions of the regulation.

Materials produced by the content team served as a starting point for the working group that included the following members: Kalle Tammemäe, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs at the Tallinn University of Technology (nominated by the Estonian Rectors' Conference); Enno Lend, Rector of the University of Applied Sciences (nominated by the Estonian Rectors' Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences); Monika Maljukov, Vice Chairperson (nominated by the Federation on Estonian Students Unions); Peter Gornischeff, Director of Services (nominated by the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry); and Helen Põllo, Deputy Head of Higher Education Department (nominated by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research). The working group was managed by Heli Mattisen, Director of EKKA. The first meeting of the working group was held on 15 March 2012 and the second on 5 April. By the second meeting the working group had received feedback from some higher education institutions through its members. For instance, the draft version was commented on by Anneli Lorenz from the Estonian University of Life Sciences and Siret Rutiku from the University of Tartu.

At the meeting of 5 April the working group decided that after additions and corrections to the draft, it could be sent to stakeholders for their feedback. We are expecting feedback from all higher education institutions, professional associations, governmental authorities as well as representative organisations of students, pupils, employers and entrepreneurs. After having analysed the feedback, we shall improve the draft for quality assessment of SPGs, inform those who gave feedback about all the proposed amendments and additions, coordinate the final draft with the working group and send it to the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for approval.

Adoption of the procedure for quality assessment of SPGs by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council has been planned for the beginning of June.

Initial principles used in the development of procedures for quality assessment of SPGs

The working group based the development of quality assessment of SPGs on the following principles:

1. In its essence the quality assessment of SPGs is supportive and developing, not controlling. Its purpose is to give higher education institutions feedback for improving the quality of

instruction while, for example, the transitional evaluation only assessed conformity with the minimum requirements. The quality assessment of SPGs takes into account the context of a specific higher education institution and a specific study programme group and their development needs. The procedures for quality assessment of SPGs allow higher education institutions to participate in determining the scope of a review (II.2); the composition of an assessment committee; and the emphases of a review arising from self-evaluations of study programme groups and from institutional development needs (13.4 and 14).

2. Formal requirements for compositions of assessment committees (the number of members, proportion of foreign and Estonian experts) allow one to take into account the specifics of higher education institutions and study programme groups. Committees comprise specialists in the fields of the study programmes under evaluation and experts in university teaching methods (14 and 15).

3. The standards for quality assessment of SPGs are based on the criteria for institutional accreditation (in the field of teaching and learning) and take into account the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Unlike institutional accreditations, quality assessments of SPGs focus on study programmes, the content of studies, teaching and learning.

4. Study programmes are at the heart of self-analysis and assessment, but trends in the entire study programme group of a higher education institution are analysed as well. The right to conduct studies under a study programme group denotes national recognition and therefore serves as a quality guarantee for all study programmes – both existing and future ones – incorporated in that study programme group. It is also assessed what conclusions have been made based on the results of the previous review and how trends within a study programme group are related to the strategic objectives of a higher education institution.

5. Logic of the so-called PDCA cycle serves as a basis for both self-evaluation and assessment: how are planning, applying, evaluating and improving of results enacted.

6. The questionnaire for self-evaluation of quality assessment of SPGs guides higher education institutions to compare the study programmes and their delivery with similar study programmes in foreign higher education institutions. A prerequisite for international competitiveness of Estonian higher education is to know the international context and trends and to relate to them.

7. Educational institutions are the main target groups of quality assessments of study programme groups. For the sake of honest, evidence-based and self-critical self-analyses, EKKA does not disclose self-evaluation reports. Assessment reports are made available to the general public on EKKA's website. We expect higher education institutions to make their self-evaluation reports available to their memberships on their intranets or by other means of internal communications.

Assessment areas and standards

Self-evaluations and assessments are conducted in five assessment areas: 1) study programme and study programme development; 2) resources; 3) teaching and learning; 4) teaching staff; and 5) students (5.2.1.-5.2.5.). Each assessment area specifies standards based on the Standard of Higher Education, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and other legislation regulating quality assurance in higher education. To clarify the content of standards and to unify the analytic process, the Form for Self-Evaluation of Study Programmes includes a series of leading questions (Appendix 2 to this Explanatory Memorandum).

Self-evaluation of study programme groups

Self-analysis is conducted on a study programme level, i.e. educational institutions conduct self-analyses for all study programmes incorporated in each study programme group. In addition to study programme levels, higher education institutions analyse internal trends of each study programme group as well as its strengths and areas for improvement: trends regarding admissions, students, graduates and dropouts; core study programmes and/or duplication of study programmes; qualifications of the teaching staff of the study programme group and the student-teacher ratio; etc. To this end higher education institutions compare the study programmes that constitute a group.

EKKA will prepare an electronic platform for self-evaluations and assessments that higher education institutions can use to produce both individual self-evaluations of their study programmes and self-evaluations of study programme groups. The Ministry of Education and Research will, based on the data in the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS), prepare background information of five-year trends of study programme groups of higher education institutions (student, admission, graduate and dropout numbers, international mobility) which will be available for both higher education institutions and assessment committees.

If there are more than 10[1] study programmes in one study programme group (including all academic cycles), in consultation with the higher education institution EKKA may make its selection of study programmes to be reviewed in depth. The sample of study programmes shall be based on the following principles: 1) If possible, reasoned proposals by the higher education institution, based on self-evaluations of its study programmes, are taken into account. 2) The sample represents study programmes from all academic cycles within a study programme group (ProfHE, BA, MA, INT). 3) If several structural units deliver study programmes of the study programme group, the sample will include at least one study programme from each structural unit. 4) The sample includes all study programmes added to the study programme group during the period between assessments.

Higher education institutions may, along with their self-evaluation reports and based on self-evaluations of study programme groups and/or institutional development needs, submit to EKKA their proposals regarding topics (e.g. internationalisation, assessment of learning outcomes) on

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[1] As of the end of 2011, there were 10+ study programmes in each of the following study programme groups at these higher education institutions: Arts at the Estonian Academy of Arts; Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery at the Estonian University of Life Sciences; Performing Arts of Estonian Academy at the Music and Theatre; Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology as well as Business and Administration at the Tallinn University of Technology; Humanities, Languages and Cultures, Teacher Training and Educational Science at the Tallinn University; Languages and Cultures, Social Science, Teacher Training and Educational Science, and Business and Administration at the University of Tartu.

which assessment committees could provide more detailed feedback. If possible, EKKA also takes into account proposals by higher education institutions upon forming assessment committees.

Assessment committees

When selecting individuals for assessment committees, EKKA aims to assure that a committee comprises experts in the field of the study programmes (or the sample) under evaluation both from higher education institutions and from outside of higher education institutions. It is equally important to ensure that a committee includes experts who have participated in the development of similar study programmes at recognised higher education institutions and are aware of the latest trends in the European and world higher education areas.

Committees generally include both Estonian and foreign experts, but in justified exceptional cases, and in agreement with the higher education institution, it is possible to form a committee comprised exclusively of either foreign or Estonian experts. A committee composed solely of Estonian experts may be considered if in the study programme group there is an adequate number of internationally recognised local experts and if the higher education institution provides education only in the first cycle of higher education. Each committee includes at least one member from outside of higher education institutions (an entrepreneur, public official, representative of a professional association or employers' organisation, etc.) and at least one person who is currently enrolled as a student at the moment of approving the committee.

Upon forming a committee, EKKA shall, where appropriate, consider reasoned proposals by higher education institutions regarding member candidates as well as topics to be focused on.

Assessment visits

Assessment visits are integral parts of the process, but they are conducted in flexible ways – the cooperation among all committee members is essential, both before and after the visit. In justified cases it is possible that not all committee members participate in the assessment visit; some foreign experts may, for example, give their input by means of a written analysis of a study programme. Given the size and diversity of some study programme groups, it is appropriate to include such possibility in the regulation.

Assessment reports and the decisions by the Quality Assessment Council

In their assessment reports committees identify the strengths and areas for improvement of the study programmes under evaluation by five assessment areas (including international comparisons), provide concise analyses on the study programme groups and the recommendations for improving the quality of instruction.

The EKKA Quality Assessment Council weighs the strengths and areas for improvement identified by assessment committees along with their recommendations, and then will decide whether to conduct the next quality assessments of those study programme groups in seven years or less. The Quality Assessment Council will decide to conduct a new assessment in less than seven years if there is a major non-compliance of the study programmes, their delivery and instruction-related development activities when measured against legislation as well as national and international standards.

Involving foreign agencies in the quality assessment of study programme groups

Unlike in most European countries, Estonian legislation allows one to involve competent foreign quality assurance agencies in quality assessment of higher education (requirements for foreign assessment authorities are provided for in clause 49). In the case of quality assessment of SPGs, we foresee two possibilities:

1) If a higher education institution wishes to order the quality assessment of its SPG from a foreign agency and to pay for it by funds from the state budget of Estonia, the higher education institution must first get the approval of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council (48–50). However, if the Quality Assessment Council finds that the assessment report does not include all necessary aspects for decision-making, the Council may return the assessment report to the foreign agency to be further clarified and corrected.

2) If a higher education institution wants the result of a previously conducted assessment to be taken into account as a quality assessment of a study programme group, it will submit a corresponding request along with the assessment report approved by the competent assessment authority, to the EKKA Quality Assessment Council. The higher education institution is not able to apply for the reimbursement of assessing costs from the state budget of Estonia *ex post facto*. If the Quality Assessment Council finds that the assessment report does not include all necessary aspects for decision-making, the Council has the right to refuse to make an assessment decision on the quality of that study programme group.

Timeline and cost of quality assessment of SPGs

The quality assessment of study programme groups can be introduced in autumn 2012 using the funds of the ICT Programme. A regular quality assessment of SPGs should start in 2017, however, it is practical to start the process in some study programme groups earlier in order to prevent the accumulation of assessments within only two years. A preliminary timetable can be outlined and coordinated with higher education institutions after the completion of re-evaluations that will be conducted in 2013 for the study programme groups that were granted the right to conduct studies for a specified term.

According to current estimates, in order to assess the study programme groups in the first and second cycles of higher education provided by all higher education institutions, there will be a need for up to 45 assessment committees, given that one committee, consisting of an average of five members, will evaluate two to three higher education institutions (depending on the size of both higher education institution and study programme group), and will remain in Estonia for eight days. Costs related to one committee are estimated at EUR 23,000 and therefore the costs for assessing the quality of all study programmes will be approximately EUR 1 million. It is practical to spread both the costs and workload over four years.

Compiler of this Explanatory Memorandum: Heli Mattisen

APPENDIX 1 Overview of External Quality Evaluations Regarding Higher Education Institutions

1. **Initial assessment of study programme groups** occurs when an educational institution wants to provide higher education under a new study programme group, or when an institution that does not yet have the right to provide higher education applies for such right. Based on subsection 22^3 (4) of the Universities Act, the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency will be involved with the initial assessment of study programme groups (i.e. conducting expert analyses). The transitional evaluation conducted in 2009–2011 basically represented a similar kind of expert analysis, the difference being that the already existing study programme groups were evaluated. In the course of initial assessment it is judged whether the qualifying requirements for the teaching staff, as determined by the educational institution, are sufficient, and whether the actual qualifications of the teaching staff involved with the new study programme group are adequate; whether the available resources needed for conducting studies are adequate; whether the described learning outcomes are achievable by a given study programme and whether they are in conformity with the requirements for conducting studies at the level of higher education. The results of initial assessment of study programme groups are forwarded to the Minister of Education and Research; the decision on granting a higher education institution the right to conduct studies is made by the Government of the Republic of Estonia. Unlike other external quality evaluations, costs of the initial assessment of study programme groups are incurred by an applicant. EKKA's *Guidelines for Initial Assessment of Study Programme Groups* and other information about requesting the right to conduct studies is available on EKKA's website http://www.ekka.archimedes.ee/universities/initial-assessment-of-study-programme-groups

2. **Institutional accreditation** is an external evaluation in the course of which EKKA assesses the compliance of the management, administration, academic and research activity, and academic and research environment of universities and institutions of professional higher education (hereinafter 'higher education institutions'), with the legislation as well as with the purposes and development plans of higher education institutions. The purpose of institutional accreditation is to support the development of strategic management and culture of quality in higher education institutions, inform stakeholders about the outcomes of the main activities thereof, and enhance the reliability and competitiveness of Estonian higher education. Institutional accreditation includes the following four assessment areas: 1) organisational management and performance; 2) teaching and learning; 3) research, development and/or other creative activity; and 4) service to society. Higher education institutions have an obligation to undergo the institutional accreditation at least once in each seven years. Costs of assessments are incurred from the state budget. The estimate costs for the first round of accreditations is EUR 630,000 and according to the approved timetable all higher education institutions shall undergo the first round of institutional accreditations in the period 2011–2016. Additional information about institutional accreditations is available on EKKA's website http://www.ekka.archimedes.ee/universities/institutional-accreditation

3. Based on subsection 2 (31) of the Universities Act, **quality assessment of study programme groups** is an external evaluation which assesses the compliance of study programmes, including their delivery and instruction-related development activities – measuring them against legislation as well as national and international standards and trends, with the aim to provide recommendations for improving the quality of instruction. Higher education institutions must undergo the quality assessment of their study programme groups at least once in each seven years. The starting point for calculating the time for a subsequent assessment of a specific study programme group is the date when the right to conduct

studies was granted (i.e. the date of entry into force of a resolution of the Government of the Republic). Therefore the higher education institutions which were granted the right to conduct studies in the end of 2009 should undergo the quality assessment of the same study programme group no later than by the end of 2016. As the definition reveals, the quality assessment of study programme groups focuses on the content of studies and on instruction-related development activities within a study programme group. These aspects are not evaluated in the course of institutional accreditation.

4. Based on the Organisation of Research and Development Act, **evaluation of research and development** is carried out either as a regular evaluation or as a targeted evaluation. Upon a regular evaluation, the level of research and development of the corresponding field of research and development at a research and development institution is assessed by comparing it with internationally recognised criteria (as to higher education institutions, universities are considered to be research and development institutions). Assessments are conducted in four large fields of research. A positive decision of the regular evaluation grants a higher education institution the right to launch a doctoral programme based on the corresponding field of research. However, in the course of the transitional evaluation it turned out that a positive decision for the field of research as a whole does not ensure the quality of doctoral studies. For example, as a result of the transitional evaluation, four doctoral programmes were not granted the right to conduct studies, with specific references to the inadequate research activities in the sub-areas or disciplines connected with the study programmes. Nevertheless, the corresponding field of research had been granted a positive result under the regular evaluation. The Ministry of Education and Research has the right to conduct a targeted evaluation on its own initiative or on proposals from other ministries to prepare strategic development plans for research and development or other research-related policy decisions and measures, or to evaluate and analyse their impacts and applications.

To some extent, research and development activities of higher education institutions are assessed by all above-listed external evaluations (points 1 through 3 of this Appendix 1). However, the institutional accreditation is focused on the management of research, development and/or other creative activity (hereinafter referred as 'RDC') rather than on the level of research results. Thus the relevance of RDC objectives set out by a higher education institution, effectiveness of the planned activities to achieve them, the regularity of analysing the results (including comparisons) and applying them are under evaluation. A higher education institution is primarily expected to present and analyse the RDC results which are included in its development plan as priorities. Both the results of evaluation of research and the results of quality assessment of study programme groups are taken into account. The RDC is evaluated in the course of institutional accreditation of professional higher education institutions as well, but such evaluation is always based on the objectives that higher education intuitions have set for themselves.

Upon the quality assessment of study programme groups, evaluation of the level of research and development is primarily relevant in the case of doctoral studies, and therefore we plan to combine the evaluation of research with the quality assessment of doctoral programmes. At the same time one cannot ignore the evaluation of the level of research and development when assessing the first and second cycles of higher education either, especially regarding professional higher education institutions, who do not participate in the evaluation of research, but still conduct master degree studies, which presumes the existence of research and development at the international level. In other cases when assessing the quality of study programme groups, the analyses of research and development activities focus on

coherence between teaching and research by the teaching staff, and on research-based learning in general.

APPENDIX 2

SELF-EVALUATION OF A STUDY PROGRAMME GROUP
A sample form

Study programme group	Informatics and Information Technology
Higher education institution	
Brief description of the self-evaluation process	*Time frame, participants, distribution of work, coordination at the higher education institution, etc.* *up to 800 characters*

A. GENERAL PART

1. **A brief introduction of the higher education institution** (contains links to its website – its structure; development plan; development plan of a field or structural unit, if appropriate; key results; and other relevant background information that gives external experts an overview of the context for the study programme group), **defining the relative position of the study programme group under evaluation in the higher education institution, in Estonia and/or internationally.**

Self-definition of the higher education institution, a brief overview of its history, relationship between the study programme group and strategic goals of the higher education institution, the activity level of the study programme group (number of students) in comparison with other study programme groups in the higher education institution, importance in Estonia, etc. *up to 1800 characters*

2. **Aggregate data on study programmes within the study programme group** (a snapshot of study programmes within the study programme group based on the data of the higher education institution at the time of the submission of the self-evaluation report)

Title of a study programme	Study (PHE, BA, MA)	The year when the study programme was launched	Responsible structural unit(s) (in the case of a joint study programme, the partnering higher education institution, and its unit as well)	Admission (the most recent for which data is available)	Graduates (the most recent for which data is available)	Number of students at the time of submitting the report

3. **A brief description of the most important developments in the study programme group between evaluation periods:** a brief description of trends in the study programme group over the last five years based on background data prepared by the Ministry of Education and Research (background information includes data on all study programmes within the study programme group regarding admissions, number of students, graduates, international students and dropouts for the last five

years); comparison with the same study programme group of other higher education institutions, if appropriate; an overview of changes in the study programme group of the higher education institution during the period between the assessments (launching, closing, merging study programmes, developing joint study programmes, etc.) with a brief description of reasons or a reference to the self-evaluation of the specific study programme.

Questions which the analysis could answer: What have been the more significant changes in the study programme group since the previous assessment (a transitional evaluation, an expert analysis of the quality of teaching and learning, etc.)? Which improvements have been introduced in study programmes or in their structure based on the recommendations by experts? Description of the reasons for closing or merging study programmes (if appropriate). How do you evaluate developments/trends within the study programme group compared to the same study programme group of other higher education institutions?

up to 3000 characters

4. **Summary of the strengths and areas for improvement, as shown in self-evaluations of study programmes within the study programme group of the higher education institution** *(note: EKKA will order an application for an e-assessment environment which allows it to generate aggregate data automatically into a table from self-evaluation environments of study programmes, by assessment areas and study programmes. However, this application may not be ready by September 2012, which means that higher education institutions need to create the aggregate table by a copy-paste method).*

example

Assessment area	Study programme	Study	Academic unit	Strengths	Application of strengths	Areas for improvement	Activities for eliminating weaknesses
Students	Computer systems	MA	Faculty of Information Technology, Department of Computer Engineering	+... +...		-... -...	
	Informatics	BA	Faculty of Information Technology, Department of Computer Engineering	+... + +...		-... -... -...	

5. **Analysis of the more important strengths and areas for improvement of the study programme group, and the application of strengths and possible ways to eliminate weaknesses**

Based on self-evaluation, what are the general strengths of the study programme group and how do they benefit the higher education institution in improving quality of teaching and learning? Point out the more essential problems and possible ways to eliminate them. Is implementation of development plans, which are prepared based on self-evaluations of study programmes, monitored at the level of study programme group/academic unit/university, and how?

6. Additional comments

Comments, proposals (*the opportunity to write additional comments based on self-evaluations of study programmes, among other things; to make proposals to the assessment committee/EKKA on priorities, etc.*)

B. SELF-EVALUATION OF A STUDY PROGRAMME

Study programme group	*Informatics and Information Technology*
Higher education institution	
Title of the study programme	
Study	*professional higher education, bachelor degree and master degree studies, and integrated bachelor and master degree studies*
Academic unit responsible for conducting the study programme	*faculty, institute, department, chair; in the case of departments/chairs, please specify the faculty/institute at which they operate, if appropriate*
Principal compiler of self-evaluation of the study programme, Study Programme Manager / Programme Manager	*name, position, contact details*
Brief description of the process of self-evaluation of the study programme	*time frame, participants, distribution of work, coordination, etc.* *up to 800 characters*

1. **Study programme and study programme development**

    The content and structure of the study programme are consistent with its objectives and learning outcomes. Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole. The launch or development of the study programme is based on legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being strived for. The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

    - Has the higher education institution or its structural unit set objectives for the quality of study programmes? How have these objectives been achieved within the given study programme?

- Please describe the process of study programme development (launching, changing, internal evaluation). Who are involved in it, what is taken into account (needs of the labour market, strategies, etc.)?

- How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of subjects?

- What were the more important changes in the study programme over the last three years, for what purpose and on what basis were they made?

- Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other? What are these estimates based on?

- Please evaluate student feedback on the study programme and subjects obtained over the past three academic years (for example: What received the most positive feedback from students? What were the students most critical of? What could cause such criticism? Please indicate specific activities of study programme development which you have started or which have already been implemented based on student feedback.

- Have you asked for or received feedback from the teaching staff on coherence of the subjects, how has such feedback been taken into account? Please point out the ideas you have gotten or already carried out based on feedback from employers and alumni.

- Do you cooperate with (foreign) partners in conducting the study programme (e.g., the study programme has joint modules with another (foreign) higher education institution, summer and winter schools are provided, supervisions, practical training facilities, etc.); and who are the partners? In what ways do you cooperate? How many foreign members of the teaching staff are involved? How and on what basis is it done? What are their qualifications?

- Have study programmes been compared to other similar study programmes, including internationally, and to what purpose? The results of comparisons?

- What opportunities are created for international students for participating in the study programme (subjects in a foreign language)?

- Compliance with the Standard of Higher Education and other (international) standards.

Strengths and areas for improvement relating to the study programme and study programme development

Strengths (+)	Possibilities for applying strengths

Areas for improvement (-)   Activities for eliminating weaknesses

Comments, proposals (*the opportunity to write additional comments, make proposals to the assessment committee/EKKA on priorities, etc.*)

2. **Resources**

Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme. There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available. Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.). Resource development is sustainable.

- Has the higher education institution or its structural unit set objectives for resources? How have these objectives been achieved within the given study programme?

- Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/improved?

- Please evaluate student feedback on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc., obtained over the past three academic years. Is it possible to react to it, and how?

- What is feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.? Is it possible to react to it, and how?

- How is it determined that resources are in accord with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is such accord ensured? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?

- What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.); how are these trends taken into account; and how are the risks mitigated?

Strengths and areas for improvement relating to learning environment and resources

Strengths (+)   Possibilities for applying strengths

Areas for improvement (-)   Activities for eliminating weaknesses

Comments, proposals (*the opportunity to write additional comments, make proposals to the assessment committee/EKKA on priorities, etc.*)

3. **Teaching and learning**

(the order of standards has been changed) **The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes. Modern teaching methods are used in teaching. The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility. Assessment of learning outcomes (including recognition of prior learning and work experiences) is transparent and objective.**

- Has the higher education institution or its structural unit set objectives for the quality of the process of teaching and learning? How have these objectives been achieved within the given study programme?

- How is the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme and subjects ensured? *(Is it monitored that the teaching staff base their choice of teaching and assessment methods on objectives/needs of the study programme and subjects, and how? Give examples of good practice.)* Are people from outside the higher education institution involved in assessment of learning outcomes (including in the defence of final papers)?

- How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, applied projects, final papers, etc.) organised? What is student feedback on supervision? What are the main problems related to supervision and how are they solved?

- How is student involvement in research and development set up?

- How is students' independent work organised *(how is independent work defined within a subject, how is it supervised and assessed, what are the conditions for independent work – environment, teaching aids, etc.)*?

- How is practical training organised *(finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)*? What role does practical training have in achieving objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?

- How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by credit points? Is it analysed, and how?

- How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experiences ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions? Problems and their solutions.

- Please evaluate student feedback on the teaching and learning process (including teaching methods and assessment of learning outcomes) obtained over the past three academic

years. How have you analysed the results of such feedback and applied them *(point out trends, evaluate the impact of such feedback)*?

- What is done to reduce/prevent academic fraud? How does the higher education institution address fraud cases?

- Is the support by information systems and help by members of the support staff (Academic Affairs Specialists, Office of Academic Affairs, Personnel Office, etc.) adequate for conducting the study programme? What kind of additional help is needed from them?

Strengths and areas for improvement relating to the process of teaching and learning

Strengths (+)   Possibilities for applying strengths

Areas for improvement (-)   Activities for eliminating weaknesses

Comments, proposals (*the opportunity to write additional comments, make proposals to the assessment committee/EKKA on priorities, etc.*)

4. **Teaching staff**

There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning. Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive. Recognised members (including foreign and visiting members) of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme. The teaching staff is engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.

- Has the higher education institution or its structural unit set objectives for qualifications of its teaching staff, their teaching skills, etc.? How have these objectives been achieved within the given study programme?

- Please evaluate student feedback on the teaching staff related to the study programme obtained over the past three academic years (teaching skills, proficiency in English in the case of international study programmes, etc.). Have the results of feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff, etc.)?

- How are (novice) members of the teaching staff supported in relation to the development of their teaching skills? *(Whose task is it to give feedback to members of the teaching staff on results of teaching and their teaching skills? Please give examples of professional and teaching-skills development of the teaching staff related to the given study programme.)* Do

the teaching staff apply their new skills, and how? Are the teaching staff's teaching skills taken into account when reselecting them, and how?

- How is teaching by the teaching staff (courses, supervision) connected with their research, development and/or creative activity? How does research, development and/or creative activity by the teaching staff enhance the quality of providing education according to the given study programme?

- To which extent and how did teaching staff of other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions or employer representatives participate in conducting the study programme over the past three academic years (e.g., in teaching, defence committees, as opponents, etc.)? What does the higher education institution do to involve them? How do you evaluate this cooperation, its scope and quality?

- Evaluation (preferably in international comparison) of the number (adequacy), workload, qualifications and age structure of the teaching staff.

Strengths and areas for improvement relating to the teaching staff

Strengths (+)   Possibilities for applying strengths

Areas for improvement (-)   Activities for eliminating weaknesses

Comments, proposals (*the opportunity to write additional comments, make proposals to the assessment committee/EKKA on priorities, etc.*)

5. **Students**

   Student places are filled with motivated and capable students. Dropout rates are low, the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large. Students study at other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as part of their studies. Employment rate of alumni is high. Alumni and their employers are satisfied with their professional preparation and social competencies.

   - Has the higher education institution or its structural unit set objectives for student motivation, students' academic progress, etc.? How have these objectives been achieved within the given study programme?

   - What are the admission requirements for the study programme? How do you evaluate students' prior preparation/education (including the level of international students, for example)? How do you ensure the enrolment of a motivated and adequately prepared student contingent?

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- What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?

- What has been done to reduce the number of dropouts deleted from the matriculation register on the initiative of the higher education institution, and bring such students back to the university?

- How are students' special needs considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)? How can students themselves design the content of their studies? What are students' options within the study programme and outside it?

- How do you evaluate the success of your alumni in the labour market? Do you obtain feedback from graduates in the study programme on their employment and continuation of studies, and do you use it? What are the conclusions? Do you know how many graduates continue their studies abroad?

- What has been done to support student learning and graduating within the standard period of study *(student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)*?

- How has national and international student mobility been supported?

- Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?

Strengths and areas for improvement related to students

Strengths (+)   Possibilities for applying strengths

Areas for improvement (-)   Activities for eliminating weaknesses

Comments, proposals (*the opportunity to write additional comments, make proposals to the assessment committee/EKKA on priorities, etc.*)

6. **Aggregate analysis of the study programme** *(more important strengths and areas for improvement based on the previous analysis of the study programme)*

Strengths (+)   Possibilities for applying strengths

Areas for improvement (-)   Activities for eliminating weaknesses

Comments, proposals (*the opportunity to write additional comments, make proposals to the assessment committee/EKKA on priorities, etc.*)

7. The action plan *(based on the results of self-evaluation)*

Action(s)	Person(s) responsible	Term	Expected result(s)