



ESTONIAN QUALITY AGENCY  
FOR HIGHER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

# Report for Institutional Accreditation and Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in VET Tartu Health Care College



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## Introduction

### Institutional accreditation and quality assessment of study programme groups in VET

**‘Institutional accreditation’** is the process of external evaluation which assesses the conformity of a University or higher education institution’s management, work procedures, study and research activities and environment to both legislation and the goals and development plan of the higher education institution itself. This is feedback-based evaluation in which an international assessment panel analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the institution of higher education based on the self-assessment report of the institution and on information obtained during the assessment visit, providing recommendations for improvement and ways of implementing them.

**The goal of institutional accreditation** is to support the development of strategic management and quality culture that values learning-centeredness, creativity and innovation in the higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as to increase the societal impact of education, research and development delivered by the HEIs.

HEIs are assessed according to twelve standards of institutional accreditation. Assessment focuses on the core processes of the HEI – learning and teaching, research, development and creative activities, and service to society – as well as on strategic management of the organisation and resource management. The learning and teaching process is examined in more detail under five standards (study programme, teaching staff, learning and teaching, student assessment, and learning support processes). Throughout the assessment process, there is a focus on academic ethics, quality culture and internationalisation.

Educational institution must undergo institutional accreditation at least once every seven years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education [Guide to Institutional Accreditation](#).

**Assessment of the quality of vocational training** (hereinafter assessment of quality) is an external assessment, based on an internal assessment, conducted by external independent assessors once in every six years. In the course thereof the performance and sustainability of teaching and education, including the development of curriculum, learning and teaching, leading and management and the use of resources shall be evaluated.

**The objective of the quality assessment of vocational education** is to foster the development of learning-oriented school culture and to increase the reliability of vocational education.

Quality assessment of vocational education provides an opportunity:

- For the school to get feedback about the quality of the study process and recommendations to develop it and to use the results of an independent external evaluation for the school's strategic management.
- To inform interested groups (learners, labour market, state, the society in general) about how well vocational education meets the national demands, objectives of development plans, labour market needs and expectations of the learners.

Quality assessment of vocational education focuses on the studies.

Vocational educational institution must undergo quality assessment of curriculum groups in VET at least once in 6 years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for VET.

The institutional accreditation and quality assessment of curriculum groups in VET at *Tartu Tervishoiu Kõrgkool (Tartu Health Care College, THCC)* took place in October 2019. Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (**EKKA**) compiled an international assessment panel. **The following persons formed the assessment team:**

Joke Denekens	Emeritus Professor, past Vice Rector University of Antwerp (Belgium)
Johanna Heikkilä	Senior Advisor at Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (Finland)
Lies van Gennip	Member board of directors of Albert Schweitzer Hospital. Former CEO/Chair Nictiz, national center for eHealth and standards. From November 2019 CEO a.i. of PALGA, Dutch nationwide registry for pathology. (The Netherlands)
Jonathan Loose	Research Associate, School of Advanced Studies, University of London; Institutional Reviewer, UK Quality Assurance Agency; and Research Director, Stewards Company, Ltd. (United Kingdom)
Barbara Schildberger	Head of Degree Programme in Midwifery; Diversity Manager, University of Applied Sciences for Health Professions in Upper Austria (Austria)
Stella Polikarpus	Lecturer in Crises Management Chair, Rescue College, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (Estonia)
Julia Lezik	Tartu branch Office manager and ambulance nurse in Tartu Ambulance Service (Estonia)
Andra Õismaa	Medicum Tervishoiuteenus Ltd, Nurse Manager, Training Manager (Estonia)
Rait Bessonov	Student (Faculty of Medicine), University of Tartu. Assistant Physician, Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinic of Tartu University Hospital, Nursing Department (Estonia)

### Assessment process

The assessment process was coordinated by EKKA staff - Ms Reet Taimsoo and Ms Tiia Bach.

After an initial preparation phase where the distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment panel was determined, the work of the assessment panel in Estonia started on Monday, 14 October 2019, with an introduction to the Higher Education System as well as the assessment procedures by EKKA. Members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group during the site visit and to a detailed schedule for the site visit.

During the following three days, from Tuesday 15th to Thursday 17th of October 2019, meetings were held with representatives of Tartu Health Care College as well as external stakeholders.

On Friday, 18 October 2019, the panel held an all-day meeting, during which the findings of the panel were discussed in detail and the structure of the final report was agreed. Findings of the team were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report and evaluation of the 12 accreditation standards.

The Institutional Accreditation Report for THCC consists of three parts: (1) a report on institutional accreditation, (2) a report on quality assessment of three study programmes in higher education, and (3) a report on quality assessment of study programmes in VET. The findings of the study programme assessments are used to inform the full institutional accreditation report, through a form of 'sampling'.

### Information about Tartu Health Care College (THCC)

Tartu Health Care College (THCC) has been a state institution of professional higher education administered by the Ministry of Education and Research since 2005. The roots of the College go back to the school of midwives at the obstetric clinic of Tartu University in 1811.

THCC's functioning was regulated by the "Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act" (until 31 August 2019) and now by the "Higher Education Act" (from 1 September 2019). It is also regulated by other relevant legal acts including the "Vocational Educational Institutions Act" as well as by its statutes.

During the period 2015-2020 the College has shifted from a college-centred approach to a society-centred approach. The institution's ambition is to have an impact on the community in health care and wellness. The College states its aim as follows: "to be an internationally acknowledged professional higher education institution with a modern learning environment" and "to influence health behaviour of the population and of the development of a healthy living environment as well as to develop by the promotion of lifelong learning, the specialities of professional higher education and vocational training provided by the College through the study, research and development activities".

The institution's core values are integrity, development, human-centredness, and professionalism.

The College provides education in the fields of health, wellbeing and service (1 master's curriculum, 7 professional higher education curricula and 5 vocational training curricula).

## Learners at Tartu Health Care College

HaridusSilm, as of 10.11.2018

\* The data on 2018/2019 academic year is presented as of 31.05.2019 (THCC data)

PROFESSIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION		ACADEMIC YEAR				
		14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19 *
<b>Nursing</b>	Students	503	515	524	504	514
	Admitted	142	156	181	183	207
	Discontinued	61	60	54	49	45
	Graduated	102	111	105	111	107
<b>Nursing (shortened study time)</b>	Students	69	62	32	12	6
	Admitted	-	30	-	-	-
	Discontinued	14	10	4	2	0
	Graduated	28	22	18	4	0
<b>Nurse-specialist</b>	Students	43	59	74	68	6
	Admitted	30	34	60	59	-
	Discontinued	9	7	10	8	5
	Graduated	31	37	57	47	4
<b>Midwifery</b>	Students	130	117	113	115	92
	Admitted	24	26	24	30	30
	Discontinued	8	11	13	7	5
	Graduated	23	13	20	17	16
<b>Physiotherapy</b>	Students	96	96	97	89	106
	Admitted	35	32	30	30	50
	Discontinued	8	8	12	14	8
	Graduated	25	25	29	26	0
<b>Environmental Health Specialist</b>	Students	47	50	37	34	33
	Admitted	15	16	14	12	14
	Discontinued	7	7	12	7	3
	Graduated	8	17	6	9	0
<b>Biomedical Laboratory Science</b>	Students	89	78	75	80	63
	Admitted	24	26	28	25	19
	Discontinued	19	20	7	13	7
	Graduated	18	17	14	9	13
<b>Radiography</b>	Students	91	80	70	69	50
	Admitted	22	22	20	20	20
	Discontinued	9	10	5	6	6
	Graduated	24	22	16	16	13
<b>In total</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>1068</b>	<b>1057</b>	<b>1022</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>870</b>
	<b>Admitted</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>340</b>
	<b>Discontinued</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>79</b>
	<b>d</b>					

		Graduated	259	264	265	239	153
<b>MASTER'S STUDIES</b>		<b>ACADEMIC YEAR</b>					
		14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19*	
<b>Health Sciences (opened in 18/19)</b>	Students	-	-	-	-	60	
	Admitted	-	-	-	-	60	
	Discontinued	-	-	-	-	0	
	Graduated	-	-	-	-	0	
<b>In total</b>	<b>Students</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>60</b>	
	<b>Admitted</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>60</b>	
	<b>Discontinued</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>0</b>	
	<b>Graduated</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>0</b>	

### Impressions of the institution, self-evaluation report and of the site visit

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) of THCC is informative and addresses the requirements of the Institutional Accreditation Guide provided by EKKA. For each standard the College provides factual information related to its day-to-day operations and the claims it makes are typically illustrated with a number of examples demonstrating actions taken. These actions often correspond to the results of satisfaction surveys, but in all cases it is not clear how the College's operations flow from a strategic approach and from strategic aims that it is working deliberately to reach.

For each standard, the SER describes at least one point of strength along with some areas of improvement.

The panel found that the SER did not evaluate the College's recent developments and future plans in relation to its mission, vision, core values and development plan. The panel hoped to see a SWOT analysis (or equivalent) that would demonstrate a strategically driven approach, but did not find this.

The panel found that the College's building built in 2011 provides an excellent infrastructure for teaching and contains well equipped practical training rooms. It provides a very appealing and effective environment for work and study.

During its visit, the panel was pleased to encounter enthusiastic and usually satisfied students, academic and non-academic staff, graduates and stakeholders. However, the panel did not find a range of strong, constructively critical voices across the College community. Such voices are necessary to ensure that there is effective strategic development. The panel formed the view that the College community as a whole should be more effectively engaged in strategic development. This is important because it will focus attention correctly on those threats and opportunities for the College around which the next development plan should be built. The panel formed the view that in many cases, including within higher levels of management, groups were simply waiting to be given a new development plan before making any changes. This situation presents the further risk that the College will stand still and not continue to develop over the coming year.

## Main changes on the basis of recommendations of the last institutional accreditation

The panel read and heard that THCC has put significant effort into responding to the eight recommendations of the previous accreditation panel (2012).

The SER included a list of all the actions undertaken recently in response to each of the recommendations. The panel therefore observed that significant work has been done, but it was not clear that there has been an effective evaluation of the progress that has been made through these activities. The panel recognises that work is still in progress and a number of activities are ongoing. These include the full implementation of outcome-based curricula; alignment between learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods and assessment methods; and outcome-based assessment methodology in general, including increased transparency in assessment processes.

In some areas, evaluation of progress is ongoing. These include the effect of active teaching methods; the effectiveness of the Department of Academic Affairs; and the evaluation of practical training. The panel concluded that three areas require particular focus: teaching methodology, quality control of the assessment, and research and development. The College has significant work still to do in these areas.

Because of the opening of master level programmes the institution wants to turn itself into a more research-based institution. The management sees this evolution as a milestone that is a key outcome of the development plan 2015-2020. In the meantime the quality assurance and support for the other programmes in HE and VET should not be diminished.

### EVIDENCE CONSIDERED:

#### List of references:

1. Self-Evaluation Report of Tartu Health Care College and detailed appendices. 2019
2. Anonymous questionnaire conducted by EKKA
3. Panel observations of the College facilities, teaching, and electronic information systems
4. College website
5. Resources: evaluation of key indicators, development plan
6. Meeting with the management of the College
7. Meeting with the self-evaluation team
8. Meeting with staff responsible for study programme development and study process
9. Meeting with representatives of Academic Departments
10. Meeting with Representatives of the Competence Centre (Service to Society)
11. Meeting with those responsible for learning support systems
12. Meeting with employers and external stakeholders of VET curricula
13. Meeting with employers and external stakeholders of HE curricula
14. Meeting with VET students
15. Meeting with HE students
16. Meeting with VET alumni
17. Meeting with HE alumni
18. Meeting with VET teaching staff
19. Meeting with HE teaching staff
20. Meeting with managers and developers of VET curricula
21. Meeting with managers and developers of HE curricula

## Summary of the institutional accreditation findings

### 1. Strategic Management

The College takes a leading role within Estonia in designing and developing new programmes that specialise in healthcare. The College also takes an active role in the development of the National Framework of Competences for different professions and for wider society. Local stakeholders are engaged in a wide range of activities related to the planning of the institution and its programmes.

The panel found that the development plan is an operational document and not a strategic one. The plan thus fails to specify explicitly the College's strategy and steering mechanisms and does not have a systematic overarching approach to development embedded in it. Lines of responsibility for decision making and prioritisation of goals are unclear and the Development Plan is insufficiently directive. A clearer definition of strategic objectives would improve this. It is important that the College makes its approach to strategic management more explicit in a comprehensive range of areas (not only key innovations such as the implementation of master studies). What is the College aiming to achieve, and how is this to be reflected in each of its programmes and activities?

The goals and strategic justification in a number of areas are not stated explicitly as they should be. Thus it is not made clear how activities in areas including pedagogy innovation, validity and reliability of assessment methods, use of resources, quality management, RDC and internationalisation contribute to moving the College in a desired direction.

The organization finds itself in a time of transition that is demanded not only by internal change but also by external factors. These include new legislation, financial challenges, evolution into a more research-led institution, new policy for staff management. For this reason, effective and explicit strategic management of the College will be of crucial value in the near future.

In light of the concerns expressed above, the panel judged that the standard of strategic management conforms partially to requirements.

### 2. Resources

The panel has become familiar with the distribution of income and cost of the College, showing that the income and expenditures are in balance; the process of financial management and budget preparation; and the investment plan of the College for up to 2020 (appendix to the development plan). However these documents do not specify how and what kind of resources will be made available to support areas that are central to the College's development. These central areas are applied research and development and internationalization, as well as the annual areas (or themes) for focused development each year specified in the development plan. Furthermore, the panel, when asked for it, did not see an allocation model for resources to the various programmes and to innovation and development areas.

The panel detected mixed signals about the sustainability of the College's resource base. While, generally speaking, confidence was expressed in this area by upper-level management, the panel read in the SER and heard from employers that there are risks of an expected drop in income as well as a lack of structural income for research and that these risks represent significant concerns.

Given financial risk, the College should be underpinned by effective risk management that maintains an up to date and evidence-based assessment of risks, along with scenario planning to ensure that negative events can be managed effectively.

The standard guidelines say: „The HEI has an efficient staff development system. The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development are based on the objectives of the HEI's

development plan and are fair and transparent.” The panel heard that the College engages in good practice in some areas of staff management, implementing annual development interviews and providing monthly briefings to staff to ensure that the College remains up to date with developments in various areas. The panel also observed that the College has created room for its employees to develop in research and PhD, which is in line with the general research and R&D ambitions in the development plan. However, the panel expected a more focused development in these areas to build a focused knowledge base. Moreover, the panel also observed that for employees it was not clear what would be the impact for them of the implementation of the next external regulations around 5-year cycles (5 year contracts – what would be the relevance of evaluations, the impact?). The panel asked for an overall description of the principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development and how this builds on the strategic direction (current development plan). However, the panel did not find evidence of such a functioning, purposeful, formal and principled approach to the recruitment, development and management of staff. The panel formed the view that this is in part due to the fact that there was no clear strategic direction at present, and the recent centralisation of the staff management role as a direct responsibility of the rector, which is in development. The panel also noted that the implementation of the changing external regulations around the 5-year cycle for employees creates an opportunity to make significant improvements in this area as it reviews its activity in response to these changes.

The panel observed in the interviews that the College is often faced with unfilled vacancies. This represents a concern and a further reason to consider increasing the role of a newly recruited Personnel and Quality Manager within the institution.

While the College’s physical infrastructure is of a high quality, including an outstanding building, the use of this infrastructure can cause problems as it is difficult to make effective use of larger auditoria and to provide enough small rooms for working in smaller groups. Through interviews with staff, and a visit to the library, the panel formed the view that while library resources are adequate for much of the existing teaching and assessment activity, they observed that there is no strategy to extend the resources to meet research and internationalization ambitions of the College. The panel observed there are multiple copies of textbooks available in the library for students to be used in courses. The panel also learned that library functions in the hospital could be used by students. The panel considered that the objectives of the development plan (R&D, internationalisation) require additional learning aids, including librarian functions. The panel asked for a strategy to extend the resources (on paper or online) to meet and support R&D and internationalisation ambitions which are in the development plan. However, such a strategy was not present. The panel found that the College was very effective with the restricted library budget and could continue the services as is. However, the panel concluded the library resources are quite limited given the College’s ambition to raise the level of education, research and internationalization.

THCC has a culture of open internal communication and has a proactive external communication policy that is monitored. A need for better organization of information systems for students was signalled to the panel through its meetings.

Having considered the College’s resources, the panel judged that the standard of resources at THCC conforms partially to requirements.

### **3. Quality Culture**

Internal evaluation is conducted by the College at different levels. A range of satisfaction surveys are undertaken, including surveys of students, graduates, teachers, and stakeholders. These show high levels of satisfaction.

Overall the panel formed the impression that the College’s operational effectiveness is a result of the organic, deeply-embedded working practices and motivations of its individual staff in their day-to-day

activities. The panel found that many of the goals of the development plan 2015-20 were already largely in place and thus not driving top-down change but describing and incrementally improving the present state of affairs.

The panel perceived a gap between the “workfloor” which is operating according to these deeply-embedded practices and values and the top management of the institution with its plans. The College’s operational success is the result of the influence that occurs from the “bottom up”, because “top down” strategic management, steering mechanisms, and prioritisation of goals are not made explicit in different domains.

The panel did not find any comprehensive analysis of the institution’s overall position in relation to the standards. The panel is thus not able to have confidence that the College’s activities in the near future (transition phase) will help it to produce a development plan for the next strategic period (2020-2025) that will ensure quality improvements across the College. There is a need to define purpose and strategy in different domains.

The panel found that a number of its questions in this area could not be answered. Overall, it could not find a clear, comprehensive and systematic approach to quality management that would provide assurance of the College’s ongoing enhancement of its activities. In interviews with several staff members the panel asked for a clear explanation of strategy, purpose, prioritisation of goals and day-to-day management steering the process. Responses were diverging and not clear.

The panel judged that the standard of quality culture conforms partially to requirements.

#### **4. Academic Ethics**

The panel found that the institution has a working system for handling complaints and challenges. Students and teachers are aware of the severity of academic fraud and co-operate in order to avoid incidents on non-compliance with the principles of academic ethics.

The panel found that final theses are not checked systematically for academic fraud, but instead a random sample of theses are checked. The panel consider this a weakness, given the overriding importance of the thesis in demonstrating performance at level 6.

The panel judged that the standard of quality academic ethics conforms fully to requirements.

#### **5. Internationalization**

The panel found that student mobility is encouraged and a good number of students are involved in travelling for short and long periods. Staff are supported to go abroad and often visit international destinations to ensure that they are suitable for Erasmus placement, aiming to do so before any students have visited. The College has formal agreements in place with other institutions to facilitate this.

The strategic approach to internationalization is not clear, explicit and detailed, and the overarching purpose of internationalisation at THCC is not defined. A clearer strategy would enable the various aspects of internationalisation to be brought together in service of clear goals, and would helpfully constrain its many, varied activities in this area.

The panel judged that the standard of internationalization conforms fully to requirements.

## **6. Teaching Staff**

The panel found that teaching staff are motivated and have good practical skills. Annual development interviews and individual workload planning are used systematically and represent good practice in the institution. The staff appreciate receiving monthly briefings.

The panel also found that pedagogical development is not systematically embedded across all programmes and all teaching staff and that the level of skill in languages is sometimes insufficient for international mobility.

The panel judged that the standard of teaching staff conforms fully to requirements.

## **7. Study Programme**

Curriculum development and innovation as well as the way in which studies are conducted flow from the objectives established by the College's development plan 2015–2020. They also depend on the information and experience gained from participation in international networks, projects and research studies. The College's development process for curricula and research include regular collaboration with several organisations and institutions to ensure that its provision reflects the needs of the labour market and conforms to legal requirements. The College maintains close contact with employers, which ensures that its development of curricula is responsive to their changing needs. The College also engages in regular analysis of learner feedback on its curricula, and feeds this into future development.

The panel judged that the standard of study programme conforms fully to requirements.

## **8. Teaching and Learning**

The panel found that the process of admission is effectively regulated. The College demonstrates good practice in this area by providing health promotion packages for students in gymnasia that test their knowledge and skills and thereby prepare them for admission to THCC. The College also runs a scheme of student shadowing, which is a further example of good practice in teaching and learning.

The College has sought to enable different forms of study for groups and individuals with different needs, and to ensure that part-time as well as full-time studies are available as necessary. In this way the College takes into account the individual situations of learners.

The panel heard from students that they are very positive about their learning environment and appreciate the availability of individual study programmes if necessary.

The panel judged that the standard of teaching and learning conforms fully to requirements.

## **9. Student Assessment**

Some teaching staff have professionalized assessment, using outcome-based methods and ensuring alignment with learning outcomes and teaching methods. However, this professionalisation is not yet a feature that is embedded across all programmes and courses.

Not all curricula and subject programmes are internally controlled for quality of assessments. It is not clear for the panel whether all programmes have developed descriptive criterion referencing assessment matrices for assessment tasks when needed. There is a sense that the competence

assessment in THCC is a work in progress. This includes defining and providing transparent assessment criteria comprehensively across programmes and courses.

The panel found points of good practice within the College's assessment activity. In particular, the use of Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) is a good practice in the radiography programme and the College should consider implementing this in the other programmes.

Employers are generally satisfied that THCC graduates are of high quality, and notable for the typically high level of their practical skills. However, even in this area of practical skills, some stakeholders find that teaching and assessment can be improved, such as by using OSCE.

Previous IA report recommended that "The college would benefit from the development of guidelines and policy rules for quality control of the assessments." Nonetheless, the panel has questions about the transparency of the criteria for evaluation and about the control of the quality of the assessment methods and criteria to measure objectively and reliability of students' achievement of learning outcomes. The panel has not seen in a systematic way the process of development of guidelines and policy rules for quality control of the assessments by the teaching staff. There is no commission to do the control on a systematic basis after each period of assessment for the different curricula.

The panel judged that the standard of student assessment conforms fully to requirements.

## **10. Student Support**

The panel is pleased to commend the institution for its deeply embedded personal approach to students. The system of having individual learning plans provides an essential and widely appreciated support to students and is a practice that should be continued. The panel found evidence of an effective psychological counselling system that seems to be working well.

Student progress is monitored by study specialists. When there is a problem students are contacted and help is offered. The study specialists also record reasons for student withdrawal. , but these reasons are not analysed in order to determine what changes should be made to ameliorate any systemic problems that are leading to withdrawal. The department for study support has been evaluated, but the results are not yet known and so the panel was not able to evaluate this.

Although the overall employment rate is very high (96%), students need career counselling from the first year in order to find the job that suits them best and to help the small percentage of students whose path to successful employment is not clear.

The panel judged that student support and information are delivered through too many e-platforms. The use of different systems is not coherent, systematic and should be governed by policies at institutional level that are enforced.

The panel judged that the standard of student support conforms fully to requirements.

## **11. Research, development and/or other creative activity**

THCC has set in their development plan objectives that show their commitment to development of RDC activity as linked with studies. However the management of RDC could be more strategic. The set research priorities (study process, health, and evidence-based development of the profession) should be supported by strategic level structures, plans and actions targeted clearly towards advancing the

prioritized areas. THCC would benefit if the College could more clearly be able to conceptualise how widely RDC is at the moment concentrating on the priority areas and what is the societal impact of the College.

The Quality Manual has process descriptions for two processes relevant for RDC: project activities, and conducting research and development projects. The process parts, activities, responsibilities, indicators, timing and documents are defined. As the College in the future aims for wider research activity due to its widening role as Master Degree provider, the College would also benefit from creating and describing supportive functions for creation of quality research project proposal for outside funding and quality of academic publications.

The College has made research a priority area in its development plan, but the strategic development of research within the College is a weakness. Research management priorities have not been set. Research and development activities are conducted on the basis of the interests of individual staff members in light of their qualifications and experience, but the institution does not support particular areas or themes in research that would enable it to bring coherence to its research activity and to focus resources to ensure effective research development.

A number of elements of research management are weak or missing. There are no defined goals for the quality of research papers and no plan to provide research resources. There is no evidence of staff being supported to write applications for research funding or to seek external funding in other ways. The panel judges that the College should be developing a research support function if it is to reach its research goals.

Overall, the approach to research is not strategic, and for this reason a wide range of activities happen without an overall coherence. Although research activity is not systematic, the College allows it to be embedded in curriculum development where it does happen and so there is some positive integration of research and teaching.

The panel judged that the standard of research and development activities conforms partially to requirements.

## **12. Service to Society**

THCC offers a wide range of services to society through the varied practical activities performed by its students. The College's aim is to guide the health behaviour of members of the community. This is an example of good practice within the College. This good practice could be further enhanced by connecting involvement in society with research, so that the College engages in the contemporary practice of "transformative learning". The College enables students to be involved in the community and to provide services while also ensuring that they each have a sustainable learning pathway. This is commendable and something that is today rarely found in higher education institutions in Estonia or elsewhere.

A further example of effective work in this area is the creation of the competence centre. The panel judged this to be an excellent development in terms of the College's structure. The aim of the centre is to provide experiential learning to students and life-long learning to specialists.

The panel found that both students and teachers are enthusiastic about activities in this area. While this is a very positive aspect of the College's activity, the impact of this work and the objectives defined for training should be assessed regularly and systematically so there is evidence that learning has taken place.

Alumni are involved in developing the institution, in community activities, and in providing feedback to ameliorate negative performance in the College.

The panel judged that the standard of community services conforms fully to requirements and is worthy of wider recognition.

A summary of the assessment outcomes are given in the table below.

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Strategic management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic ethics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internationalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning and teaching	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning support systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research, development and/or other creative activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service to society	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

#### Commendations:

- The College has a leadership role in design and development of new programmes for health care specialisation and demonstrates an active role in the developing of the national frameworks of professional standards and in surrounding society. Local stakeholders are widely engaged in the planning of the institution and its programmes. The panel has seen a highly motivated staff. Academic and administrative staff are working hard and dedicated to deliver graduates that are well prepared for professional practice and work. The results of satisfaction surveys showed a high level of employee, student and stakeholder satisfaction.
- Infrastructure is of high quality.
- The quality manual is seen as a good instrument to steer quality culture in daily practice.

- The College engages in significant levels of internationalisation activity from which staff and students benefit, and that are recognised by employers as enriching graduates in ways that improve their flexibility and performance as employees within the Estonian healthcare system. The College recognises the importance of an internationalised education for every student and the need for international engagement around research activities consistent with its development of masters level teaching.
- The College supports lifelong learning and development of teaching staff.
- In radiography curriculum and the master's programme in Health Sciences the assessment method Objective Structured Clinical Examination is used.
- The panel commends the institution for taking a personal approach to students. The system of providing individual learning plans is effective in addressing the needs of students and is appreciated by them. This system should continue. The College should continue to be proactive in managing the complexity that arises from individual learning plans. Student shadowing and package of different courses for students before starting the curriculum are good practice.
- The College publishes quite widely and seeks to popularize the research it conducts. College research has an impact on the quality of student learning outcomes as evidenced by an awarded prize and other forms of recognition.
- Awareness of being a health developer in the society with big numbers of various activities in the community is a good practice.

### ★ Worthy of Recognition:

#### Community services

THCC offers a wide range of services to society through practical activities performed by students in society. The aim of the College is to guide the health behaviour of the community members. This can be labelled as a good practice and when connected to research activities in society can be labelled as transformative learning. In doing so each student can have a sustainable learning pathway. No so much higher education institutions in the world can offer this already to their students.

#### Areas of concern and recommendations:

- The new development plan should reflect the mission, vision and core values and steer the organisation towards achievement of it through measurable key indicators and the annual action plans that follow each year. The new development plan should make a clear statement of purpose and overarching goals that would ensure it develops the College in the desired strategic direction. The goals and strategic justification in a number of areas should be made explicit. So it will be clear how activities in areas including pedagogy innovation, validity and reliability of assessment methods, use of resources, quality management, RDC and internationalisation contribute to moving the College in a desired direction. Strategic management should prioritise the goals in these different domains.
- A model should be introduced that governs the allocation of resources to innovation and development areas identified in the strategy, such as research, services to society, internationalisation, development of new masters level programmes. The model should set

criteria for resource allocation that are purposeful and that ensure sustainability to enable the College to implement its strategy systematically and thus to achieve a long term vision over a period of years. A risk-based scenario plan should be put in place to ensure that financial risks are managed and that foreseeable restrictions in resources should not restrict strategic development unnecessarily. Scenario planning should be undertaken to ensure that financial risks are effectively managed and do not threaten sustainability.

- A systematic approach to quality management in the College should be defined. The panel recommends the management to initiate and lead on strategic quality development activities across the institution; to develop valid tools to verify the achievement of the College's goals in this area. The tools developed should include SWOT analyses (or equivalent) that are applied to the different quality standards according to which the College is evaluated. Such analyses should also enable a diagnosis of the institution's position as a whole in its current transition phase towards the development of a new development plan. The new development plan (2020-25) should make explicit the College's goals, development targets and quality indicators. Quality assurance methods should then be explicitly aligned and applied to these strategic elements.
- The panel asks the College to consider returning to a process of systematic and comprehensive checking of all final theses for plagiarism. Final theses require a particularly rigorous approach because they play a crucial role in the judgment of a student's performance. A sampling approach is therefore inadequate. To check all rather than just some theses also ensures that the plagiarism detection software (e.g, Urkund) has all theses on file in order to be able better to identify cases of plagiarism in the future. This is particularly important for theses written in Estonian, since there is, relatively speaking, little data for such tools to make use of in highlighting possibly plagiarised text. The same purpose can be served via using Moodle to present homework, student projects and papers, etc. If – having considered returning to comprehensive checking of all theses – the College decides to continue with its current approach, then it should explain its rationale for retaining this system and specify the sample size and criteria for selection. The College should be able to demonstrate that it employs these criteria systematically.
- To ensure that the College takes a more strategic approach to internationalisation in future. This approach should be clear, explicit and detailed, and should define an overarching purpose for internationalisation at THCC that brings together and constrains its many, varied activities in this area. In particular, the College should reflect on how to direct its internationalisation activities strategically towards producing a net increase in the number of students who study, live and subsequently work in the Estonian healthcare system.
- There are signs of an imbalance between full-time and part-time staff members. The panel recommends increasing the percentage of teaching staff with a full-time workload. More full-time staff will make it easier to develop the curricula, RDC and pedagogical skills systematically
- The extent and effectiveness of the College's implementation of active learning methods is unclear and still needs to be explored. The College should ensure that pedagogical training for hospital teachers is obligatory.
- THCC should ensure that assessment criteria are well-known by all students and teachers involved in the study process. Assessment criteria should be made explicit in all module implementation plans and, in this way, enable all students to find assessment information

before starting their studies. Assessment criteria need to be articulated at the right level to guide learning. The panel formed a view that at present the only assessment criteria available are too general. Subject syllabi should make explicit the alignment between learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment tasks and criteria. THCC should review all module-based, learning outcome based curricula to ensure that assessment methods and criteria are appropriate to area across the College. A clear evaluation process and division of responsibilities should be designed to evaluate new assessment methods in alignment with learning outcomes and teaching methods. Since teachers are free to create assessment tasks appropriate to their courses, regular staff development training and updating of skills should be undertaken to ensure that all teachers develop clearly and consistently criterion-referenced assessments.

- The Objectively Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE) should be used in a wider range of vocational and higher education curricula. The panel welcomes the use of OSCE within the College as an effective means to provide feedback on teaching activities. OSCE cases should be designed to assess a comprehensive set of competencies, not only professional but also general.
- The panel strongly advises to make regulations so that the possibility is created to admit disabled students in the future.
- Evidence on the College's RDC prioritisation according to named focus areas was not provided. Evidence of strategic steering towards these priorities is vague as well as assessment of the impact of the named priorities. The College should make visible its prioritization of RDC for the community and the staff.
- There was no evidence provided on the supports system for RDC. Practical support in searching financing for research projects and to helping with writing proposals for national and international grants should be organized for the staff members on the areas prioritized.

## 1.1. Strategic management

### Standard:

Development planning at the higher education institution is purposeful and systematic, involving various stakeholders. The higher education institution regularly evaluates the achievement of its stated objectives and the impact of its activities.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

THCC is a professional higher education institution providing educational services not only at the level of higher education but also at vocational level for the needs of health and social service sector in Estonia. The College is a member of the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and is actively involved in educational policymaking through the Estonian Rectors'

Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences (RCUAS) as well as the Foundation of Estonian Universities of Applied Sciences.

The College takes a leading role within Estonia in designing and developing new programmes that specialise in healthcare. The College also takes an active role in the development of the National Framework of Competences for different professions and for wider society. Local stakeholders are engaged in a wide range of activities related to the planning of the institution and its programmes.

In THCC, OSKA reports are used as bases to estimate the labour needs in the surrounding society in order to plan numbers of future students in various fields. For some curricula (e.g. Nursing and Midwifery) admissions were agreed in 2016 by MoSA (*the Ministry of Social Affairs*), the MoER (*the Ministry of Education and Research*), the Estonian Hospitals Association, the Tallinn Health Care College and THCC. Also regional needs, including organisation of studies outside Tartu, are taken into account when planning the functions of the College. It can be concluded that THCC involves a variety of stakeholders in its development planning.

Since the previous institutional accreditation review THCC has renewed its mission, vision and core values in order to serve its purpose as a higher education institution more effectively. Overall the strategic goals and purposes for Research, Development and Creativity as well as Internationalization are left implicit within the College's strategic documents.

The College has an organized system for planning the development that includes a five-year development plan and a quality manual. The College considers these to be its strategic documents. However, the College's overall strategic goals and the mechanisms by which it steers itself towards the achievement of those goals are not easily visible in these documents or elsewhere in the organisation. Responsibility for specific goals is not clearly attributed and is often shared. It often remains unclear who is ultimately responsible for decision-making and strategic prioritisation of goals in a given area.

The panel found that the development plan is an operational document and not a strategic one. It lacks a clear statement of purpose and overarching goals that would ensure it develops the College in the desired strategic direction. The goals and strategic justification in a number of areas are not stated explicitly as they should be. Thus it is not made clear how activities in areas including pedagogy innovation, validity and reliability of assessment methods, use of resources, quality management, RDC and internationalisation contribute to moving the College in a desired direction.

The quality manual is a good instrument, best understood as an operational document. It should be implemented more explicitly and comprehensively at all levels of the institution. The development plan for years 2015-2020 is in active use by the management and staff. Upper-level management have to produce a new development plan for the next strategic period (2020-2025). In the next period, a clear and explicit distinction should be made between what is strategic (striving for the mission) and what is performance assessment (operational management).

In addition to the aforementioned documents, the College has also produced annual action plans. These plans each focus on a different developmental theme, however the connection between the development plan and the annual plans is not clear and measurable. It needs to be much clearer how the different goals, targets and themes that are set for each year drive the activities within that year in order that they are successfully addressed. The College should develop its next action plan in such a way that connections between strategic goals and activities are clear and transparent.

THCC uses both quantitative and qualitative key indicators in its development plan to assess the achievement of its objectives. However, some of the key indicators reflect very modest goals and therefore do not so much drive significant development as simply value the existing status quo.

The organization finds itself in a time of transition that is demanded not only by internal change but also by external factors. These include new legislation, financial challenges, evolution into a more research-led institution, new policy for staff management. For this reason, effective and explicit strategic management of the College will be of crucial value in the near future.

### Commendation

- The College has a leadership role in design and development of new programmes for health care specialisation and demonstrates an active role in the developing of the national frameworks of professional standards and in surrounding society. Local stakeholders are widely engaged in the planning of the institution and its programmes.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- The current development plan is an operational document as it lacks a clear statement of purpose and overarching goals that would ensure the desired strategic direction. The goals and strategic justification in a number of areas are not stated explicitly as they should be. The new development plan should reflect the mission, vision and core values and steer the organisation towards achievement of it through measurable key indicators and the annual action plans that follow each year.
- The new development plan should make a clear statement of purpose and overarching goals that would ensure it develops the College in the desired strategic direction. The goals and strategic justification in a number of areas should be made explicit, so that it will be clear how activities in areas including pedagogy innovation, validity and reliability of assessment methods, use of resources, quality management, RDC and internationalisation contribute to moving the College in a desired direction.
- Strategic management should prioritise the goals in different domains. The College's strategic approach should be clear, explicit and detailed and expressed in key performance indicators (KPIs) that measure progress in implementation.

## 1.2. Resources

### Standard:

The higher education institution develops its staff and manages its physical and financial resources in a purposeful, systematic and sustainable manner. Internal and external communications of the higher education institution (including marketing and image-building) are targeted and managed.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

The development plan describes the College's ambition to enhance both the educational level of its staff and its internationalization activities. It addresses these ambitions through staff recruitment and staff development activities.

The panel looked for evidence for compliance for purposeful, systematic and sustainable management of staff. The EKK standard guidelines state: „The HEI has an efficient staff development system. The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development are based on the objectives of the HEI's development plan and are fair and transparent.“

The panel found good efforts in this area, that can form the basis to build management of staff according to the standards. However, the panel has not found an overall, functioning, purposeful, formal and principled approach to the recruitment, development and management of staff at the moment of the evaluation, based on documents and interviews. This is illustrated by our following observations:

The College employs several mechanisms for staff development. These include the annual development interviews, about which staff are positive. One staff member that the panel met stated that “you feel supported, not controlled”. Moreover, the panel observed that the College created room for its employees to develop their interests and competences in research and PhD, which is in line with the general research and R&D ambitions in the development plan. However, the panel observed that this development was mostly individual and ad hoc and expected a more focussed and purposeful development in these areas to build a sustainable staff management as required by the standards. The panel found no evidence of this (see also our comments under standard 11).

Another mechanism is monthly staff meetings that are held to discuss issues and developments that arise and enable staff to be well-informed. The panel concluded that about 60-70% of staff participate in these monthly meetings, which are not obligatory.

Another concern was that the panel saw figures indicating vacancies that remain unfilled for significant periods of time and this issue was also confirmed in several interviews and a cause for timetabling problems that were mentioned by students as well. The panel was also concerned that the high reliance on part-time staff (as indicated in the SER and mentioned during the interviews with management and teachers), who also work as practitioners, results in some operational problems. This includes but is not limited to the prioritisation of student needs and problems with timetabling;

an issue that has been serious at times in recent years (according to interviews with students and teachers and the survey conducted by EKKA).

Moreover, the panel observed in several interviews that for employees it was not clear what would be the impact for them of the implementation of the next external regulations around 5-year cycles (5 year contracts, that could not be interrupted – what would be the role and potential impact of the evaluation of teaching staff members?).

The panel requested College staff and the newly recruited Personnel and Quality Manager for an overall description of the principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development and how this builds on the strategic direction (current development plan). However, such a description could not be presented. The panel hence concluded that the College, as of yet, has not clear and adequate principles and procedures for staff management, development and recruitment. The College is in a transitional phase in relation to human resource management. This transition is caused by external pressure resulting from changing government regulations (five year cycle), and internal pressure caused by the move towards the role of the central HR manager – a role (reporting to the rector) that began on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019. The panel judged that the College must continue to develop its professional approach to human resource management and continue to develop the role of the Personnel and Quality Manager.

The panel did not find a clear place for staff development in the College's organisational structures. In particular, the panel could not establish how staff development will be managed after implementation of the new legal position in 2020 and who is *de facto* responsible for staff recruitment and development. This lack of clarity includes the roles of rector, vice-rector and financial director. This is particularly important because the centralised staff resources being dedicated to human resource management (one part-time role) are inadequate for effective staff management.

The panel was pleased to find that employers, academic and other College staff and students were all positive about the College's infrastructure as something that enables a good quality education. The panel also welcomed the College's approach to improving the infrastructure by describing what is needed in its development plan and that it was able to evaluate progress and conclude that developments are moving forward according to plan.

The College has a high quality infrastructure with well equipped auditoria, classrooms and labs. While the College's physical infrastructure is of a high quality, the use of this infrastructure can cause problems as it is difficult to make effective use of larger auditoria and to provide enough small rooms for working in smaller groups.

Through interviews with staff, and a visit to the library, the panel formed the view that while library resources are adequate for much of the existing teaching and assessment activity, the panel observed that there is no strategy to extend access to books and materials to support research and internationalization ambitions of the institution and this will limit the College's further development in these areas. The panel asked whether more budget will be reserved for future extension of the access of library functions for research and internationalisation and found this is not yet the case. Hence, the panel concludes that the library resources are too limited given the College's ambition to raise the level of education, research and internationalization.

In the interviews the panel asked how the College innovates its curricula to make sure students are prepared and ready for the digital transformation in health. This is expected to result in needs for different skills of health care workers in the future. Estonia is leading this digital transformation in many areas and also in health. Staff commented that they were well aware of this transformation and the resulting needs for new competences of health care staff. However, allocated resources were too

limited to invest in innovative technologies to adapt curricula in this respect. For example, it was mentioned that a request to invest in eHealth applications with which patients could do vital measurements (such as blood pressure) themselves was not granted. Hence, the College cannot experience with these new eHealth tools, nor can it allow its students.

Overall, the panel judged that the College has a number of concerns in relation to resources, some of which were raised directly by staff and students:

1. The panel judged that the resources for the library are very small in view of the College's ambition to raise the level of education, research and internationalization. While staff and students expressed satisfaction, further development should be planned for the future.
2. Students are required to use a number of information systems that are not integrated, and that may be used by different teaching staff in different ways. This leads to student problems. The number of systems should be reduced and the regulations governing their use should be clearer and followed consistently.
3. Students have expressed concerns about limited space for small group work.
4. Concurrence between programmes for auditoria (even the rector has mentioned that the building is already not big enough).
5. Resources to innovate education programs, e.g. in improving digital skills to prepare for digital transformation in health care are lacking.

The development plan describes the investment plan, but this does not specify investments in areas identified for development, such as research and internationalization and annual developmental themes.

The panel were provided with an overview of institutional income and costs over recent years. This document was provided in Estonian only and so could not be assessed by the whole panel. The panel could observe that income and expenses were in balance. However, the panel's larger concern was that this document did not demonstrate the way in which resources are allocated to move the College in a clear strategic direction. Such allocation could be done for instance by budget for specific programs, for innovation projects and for areas identified for development, such as the theme life long learning which was the annual theme for 2019. Budget allocation is a tool to direct the course of an organisation. In interviews with staff, we observed that investment decisions were not understood based on the strategic direction.

The panel is aware of the fact that the partial compliance of strategic management (standard 1) impacts the performance of the standard resources. The panel is also well aware that THCC is a state institution and that resources are limited. In the context of limited resources the remarks made are even more important.

The team received mixed signals on the sustainability of financial resources. On the one hand, the panel read in the SER and heard from employers that the College will face a reduction in income in the next few years as well as a lack of any structural income for research; on the other it heard from the rectorate that these issues do not constitute financial risks for the College. The panel was encouraged to note the level of concern and ownership that stakeholders expressed in relation to the College's resource problems (including the Advisory Board's government representative). Nevertheless, the panel remained very concerned both that the College does not engage in scenario planning to ensure its financial sustainability and that the structural resources required to achieve its mission were not apparent.

The team heard evidence of an open culture of communication among colleagues within the College, both horizontally and vertically and especially within departments. This positive attribute explains the strength of the College's positive consensus culture. The HEI also has a proactive external communication policy, that (the panel read) is monitored. The panel also observed that the College was open about its external evaluations, highlighting the presence of the visitation team in the College as a whole.

The College's open communication and consensus culture is positive, but also increases the challenge of establishing effective top-down strategic influence on developments and thus increases the risk that strategic direction will be weak or absent. The panel judged that the College has not managed this risk effectively. This judgment arises from a wide range of sources. For example, students informed through the anonymous EKKA (questionnaire) that some teachers fail to appreciate the College's vision and overarching direction.

The panel observed and heard from both students and alumni in various ways that the approach to information systems for students lacks clarity and coherence. Multiple platforms are used (SIS; Moodle, mailing lists, intranet, etc.) and these are rarely if ever used consistently across programmes and courses. Students are thus unable to find information easily. Students and alumni also highlighted a lack of responsiveness to email from the College. An email policy would ensure that expectations about staff/student email communication are clear on both sides.

### Commendation

- The College has a high quality infrastructure.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- A model should be introduced that governs the allocation of resources to innovation and development areas identified in the strategy, such as research, services to society, internationalisation, development of new master's level programmes. The model should set criteria for resource allocation that are purposeful and that ensure sustainability to enable the College to implement its strategy systematically and thus to achieve a long-term vision over a period of years.
- A risk-based scenario plan should be put in place to ensure that financial risks are effectively managed and do not threaten sustainability, and that foreseeable restrictions in resources should not restrict strategic development unnecessarily.
- The panel recommends that curricula and resources are managed more effectively to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for innovation of all teaching activities in the future.

## 1.3. Quality Culture

### Standard:

The higher education institution has defined the quality of its core and support processes, and the principles of quality assurance. In the higher education institution, internal evaluation supports strategic management and is conducted regularly at different levels (institution, unit, study programme), the findings of internal and external evaluations are analysed and quality improvement activities implemented.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

The steering documents for quality assurance are the Development Plan, the annual action plans, annual reports and the Quality Manual. The College's mission, vision and core values are presented in the development plan and there is an attempt in these documents to establish objectives and key-indicators in this area. The 2015-20 development plan also identifies key stakeholders and partners, being developed in consultation with College staff and others.

Programme development boards are given a high degree of autonomy with little steering from the centre. This leads to a diverse range of ways in which the College's core values and annual themes are expressed through the organisation. Some programmes are working with general learning outcomes, others not. Some are working with OSCE, others not. Some have worked at programme level on alignment of learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment, others not. Some have a curriculum map, others not; some are working on interprofessional education, others not etc. This unconstrained diversity, which was reflected both in SER and discussions during the visit, makes it difficult to establish how the core values and yearly topics are incorporated in processes that systematically assure and improve quality. The College also lacks measurable indicators of quality in developing programmes, so it is not possible to see how evolutions in the strategic chosen annual themes have taken place in the different programmes. The panel heard from the management of THHC that they are aware of this situation and that the next development plan for 2020-25 will include more qualitative indicators to enable goals to be defined clearly and progress towards achievement of those goals to be measured and assessed effectively.

The operational tool for quality assurance is the Quality Manual. While staff are aware that this is the guide for quality assurance in daily work, the manual has not yet been fully embedded in the life of the College and therefore has not yet achieved its full potential. For example, the Manual specifies formal core processes in a range of areas and identifies persons responsible for their implementation, but the panel heard that these core activities were often carried out informally by others.

The Quality Manual is supplemented by many different documents containing policies, procedures, regulations and statutes that contribute to internal quality assurance. Examples include procedures for practical training, research and development board, statutes for administrative and support structures, curricula, study regulations, and more. The panel found that these documents are a useful supplement to the Quality Manual and providing assurance of quality.

The panel heard and read that THCC conducts internal evaluations at different levels and on a regular basis; mostly annually. These evaluations often result in activities that reduce or ameliorate the shortcomings they highlight. The College also takes opportunities provided by internal evaluation for peer learning and sharing of best practice. Evaluation of internship venues is also effective. These are visited in many cases and supervisors provide effective feedback. However, the panel formed the view that the College lacks an effective system of peer observation and review of teachers as well as a lack of pedagogical staff development activity. Tools to develop and evaluate staff competencies and to induct new teachers and staff members should be implemented in a systematic way.

The annual development interviews conducted with teaching staff were rated as helpful and positive by the teachers themselves. The teachers emphasized the positive aspects of these interviews repeatedly to the panel.

Satisfaction surveys show generally high levels of motivation and dedication among College staff. One area of dissatisfaction highlighted during the visit was the arrangement of timetables for students and staff. The College informed the panel that this was a limited problem that had been resolved through staff changes, but the panel was not fully satisfied that the College has found a satisfactory solution to ensure that the timetabling process is reliable and that all stakeholders are satisfied. The College should attend to any systemic issues that generate risks for timetabling. These include ensuring that timetables are not disrupted by the professional commitments of part-time staff and that classes take place in rooms that have a sufficient capacity for the numbers of students and types of activities involved.

The panel was concerned that the results of satisfaction surveys should be systematically fed back to students and that this is not happening at present. In particular, students should be made aware of the actions that have resulted from the feedback given on surveys. The panel found that students are not always sufficiently aware of the effects of the comments they have made.

THCC also conducts evaluations involving various external stakeholders (graduates, professionals outside THCC). These are typically conducted every two years and the results are used to drive improvements in various areas of teaching and learning.

From its conversations with significant stakeholders, the panel formed the view that THCC plays a leading role in the Estonian health care sector. These influential stakeholders believe that THCC produces high quality graduates and they value their associations with the College.

During interviews with heads of programme boards, teachers, and students the panel heard that student concerns are often and easily resolved by teachers themselves or by the relevant head of department. The heads of department thus function as the first stage in the resolution of concerns and complaints. Only when issues cannot be addressed at this low level do others, such as study specialists, become involved.

### Commendations

- The quality manual is seen as a good instrument to steer quality culture in daily practice.
- The results of satisfaction surveys showed a high level of employee, student and stakeholder satisfaction.

### Area of concern and recommendations

- A systematic approach to quality management in the College should be defined. The panel recommends the management to initiate and lead on strategic quality development activities across the institution; develop valid tools to verify the achievement of the College's goals in this area. The tools developed should include SWOT analyses (or equivalent) that are applied to the different quality standards according to which the College is evaluated. Such analyses should also enable a diagnosis of the institution's position as a whole in its current transition phase towards the development of a new development plan. The new development plan (2020-25) should make explicit the College's goals, development targets and quality indicators. Quality assurance methods should then be explicitly aligned and applied to these strategic elements.

### Suggestions for further improvement

- The requirements of the Quality Manual (which is a good instrument) should be comprehensively and deeply embedded in the College's activities in the next developmental period.
- Validated tools to evaluate staff competencies and to induct new teachers and staff members should be produced and applied.

## 1.4 Academic ethics

### Standard:

The higher education institution has defined its principles for academic ethics, has a system for disseminating them among its members, and has a code of conduct including guidelines for any cases of non-compliance with these principles. The higher education institution has a functioning system for handling complaints.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

A comprehensive knowledge and routine application of academic and professional ethics is crucial for students and employees involved in the field of health care.

THCC values its members highly. Interviews with students and alumni convinced the panel that principles of equality and ethics govern the College's interactions with its students. Teachers are also happy with the way they are treated, not raising any complaints with the panel. Furthermore, there is in some respects a common understanding of academic and professional ethics among both employees and students. This ethical understanding is disseminated through teaching on ethics, which includes consideration of case studies that embed the principles of professional ethics. The panel welcomed this integration of professional and integrated ethics, which was described in the SER. This

good practice is worthy of recognition. The panel were pleased to see that, prior to the beginning of practical training, all students are obliged to sign a confidentiality agreement. Furthermore, students are expected to analyse the aspects of professional ethics encountered during practical training. This raises awareness of ethics among students, which is an important thing to do.

The evidence indicates that THCC respects the fundamental research policies and values set out by the Estonian research institutions, the Estonian Academy of Sciences, the Estonian Research Council and the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.

All students are expected to meet certain performance criteria in the area of academic ethics (e.g. avoiding plagiarism, preventing cases of academic fraud, etc.) and action is taken to ensure this if required. The panel read that learners draw the attention of teachers and fellow students to cases of non-compliance with principles of academic ethics or academic fraud. The panel heard that College staff are well aware of ethics and that non-compliance is not tolerated.

Despite the positive work in the area of ethics, the panel's interactions with students indicated that there is often an inadequate grasp of the differences between academic and professional ethics. This is a significant concern because it is very important that those working in healthcare fields grasp this distinction. According to learners at THCC, more support is required in this area because students encounter complicated ethical situations during their practical training and on social media. They need more skills to analyse situations in light of ethical principles and to try to prevent complex situations from arising.

The panel read and heard from teachers (some of whom are programme developers) that at one time all theses were systematically checked for academic fraud, but since 2015 this system was replaced by random sampling. The decision was taken because of a reducing number of plagiarism cases (in 2013-2018 ten papers were identified as plagiarised) and a desire to reduce the burden of systematic and comprehensive checking. The panel also found that alumni are unaware of the move to random sampling. While the sampling is described as "random" it is not clear whether any criteria are in fact employed to select particular theses for scrutiny.

The panel found that the institution has a working system for handling complaints. It has become evident that the first stage of handling concerns is dealt with by the person about whom the complaint is being made; the second stage is to speak to the head of department, student counsellor and/or vice-rector of academic affairs. The complaint may be resolved by one of these individuals alone, or with the assistance of the Pedagogical Board. The panel noted a tension in this approach: on the one hand it is reasonable to address problems directly with the person about whom one is concerned, but this approach may also lead to some complaints being suppressed for fear of approaching this person directly.

### Area of concern and recommendations

- The panel asks the College to consider returning to a process of systematic and comprehensive checking of all final theses for plagiarism. Final theses require a particularly rigorous approach because they play a crucial role in the judgment of a student's performance. A sampling approach is therefore inadequate. To check all rather than just some theses also ensures that the plagiarism detection software (e.g. Urkund) has all theses on file in order to be able better

to identify cases of plagiarism in the future. This is particularly important for theses written in Estonian, since there is, relatively speaking, little data for such tools to make use of in highlighting possibly plagiarised text. The same purpose can be served via using Moodle to present homework, student projects and papers, etc. If – having considered returning to comprehensive checking of all theses – the College decides to continue with its current approach, then it should explain its rationale for retaining this system and specify the sample size and criteria for selection. The College should be able to demonstrate that it employs these criteria systematically.

### Suggestions for further improvement

- The panel strongly suggests that the College act to ensure that its documentation and training in ethics remains up to date and responsive to developments in technology. The relevant chapters of the study regulations (including improper behaviour) should be revised in line with these developments to specify and define more explicitly how new technologies (e.g. usage of smart watches, social media, etc.) may and may not be used if academic fraud is to be avoided. “New technologies” includes social media, and the panel agrees with the view of students that this area should receive particular emphasis, being included in the teaching that is given in this area.
- Students should be encouraged to contact the student counsellor regarding any complaints or concerns that cannot be addressed directly with the staff member concerned. The student council should also consider its role in this area to ensure that it functions as an effective advocate of students who have concerns.
- The code of ethics should be accessible in English in order to support internationalisation.

## 1.5 Internationalisation

### Standard:

The higher education institution has set objectives for internationalisation and assesses the attainment of these objectives regularly. The higher education institution has created an environment that encourages international mobility of students and teaching staff, supporting the development of learning, teaching and RDC activities, as well as the cultural openness of its members and Estonian society in general.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

The panel read that the College aims is to be “internationally acknowledged” by sharing best practices and experience, improving quality of teaching, learning and research and increasing international competitiveness.

The panel read that the College has encouraged mobility through participation in Erasmus+ programmes and it heard from many students who have had positive experiences of participating in international mobility through Erasmus+ for long or short periods. This included students on the VET programmes who have had very positive experience of international practicums, which were considered good for professional development. Employers are clear and enthusiastic about internationalisation activity in part because it enables students to be flexible and open to different approaches and cultural expressions. They recognise that students who have been involved in mobility stand out in terms of their additional flexibility and openness to different ways of working.

The panel also read that the College engages in teaching in English, notably through the new international Masters in Health Sciences. The library also provides databases of research materials in English, enabling students to read research papers in English. The panel saw evidence that such reading takes place, enabling final year theses to draw on international research.

The panel did not find any cases of students being unable to engage in international mobility because it did not fit in with the organisation of their studies. The panel heard that the main challenge for participation in student mobility arises from students who are employed in Estonia, or who are looking after their families.

The panel read and heard that there are collaboration agreements in place with a number of institutions outside Estonia to enable student mobility and other activities. The panel heard that staff are enthusiastic about international mobility and supportive of their students' involvement. The panel encountered examples of staff visiting institutions outside Estonia to confirm the quality of the experience that any visiting students would have.

International lecturers participate in teaching and learning each year and the panel heard that this is the case, noting that international lecturers are judged by students as notable for their high level of expertise in their own specialist areas.

The panel read that the College engages in a variety of international projects and activities, enabling staff to travel for teaching and research purposes. It heard from a significant number of staff who had been supported to undertake international trips for teaching or research purposes, as well as taking the opportunity of a visit to be involved in the quality assurance of international destinations for students. The panel read that the College met its 2015-20 targets for staff mobility by 2018. It also noted that there have been a reasonable number of international research projects in which staff have taken part.

The panel formed the judgment that the College conforms to requirements in relation to this standard, but that a number of things could be done to improve this area further. The main areas that could be improved relate to clarity in the strategic purpose and direction of internationalisation activity.

### Commendations

- The College engages in significant levels of internationalisation activity from which staff and students benefit, and that are recognised by employers as enriching graduates in ways that improve their flexibility and performance as employees within the Estonian healthcare system.

- The College recognises the importance of an internationalised education for every student and the need for international engagement around research activities consistent with its development of master's level teaching.

#### Area of concern and recommendations

- To ensure that the College takes a more strategic approach to internationalisation in future. This approach should be clear, explicit and detailed, and should define an overarching purpose for internationalisation at THCC that brings together and constrains its many, varied activities in this area. In particular, the College should reflect on how to direct its internationalisation activities strategically towards producing a net increase in the number of students who study, live and subsequently work in the Estonian healthcare system.

#### Suggestions for further improvement

- In the next strategic period, the College should identify qualitative as well as quantitative KPIs for internationalisation and ensure that its objectives in relation to these indicators are realistic but also sufficiently stretching, providing a clear challenge for the development of the College.
- To ensure that there is a system in place to ensure that *all* international student study destinations are systematically checked prior to students visiting to ensure that the student experience will be of a level at least equivalent to that experienced at THCC and that the learning outcomes of international study are those specified in curricula.
- To ensure that the internationalisation activity continues to grow and that recently approved policies are rigorously applied and regularly reviewed and enhanced in the period prior to the next review. These policies would include, but not be limited to, the policy for recognition of RPL, which is part of the study regulations approved in April 2019.
- To explore new and improved ways in which the College's internationalisation goals can be met by students whose mobility is limited for family or employment reasons, and to consider how shorter trips and "internationalisation at home" activities contribute to this.
- Ensure that all students can receive a formative international element within their education. This could include ensuring greater consistency in the involvement of international lecturers across the curriculum. It might also include providing a menu of internationalisation activities from which all students must select, which is designed in such a way that all students are able to select sufficient items to ensure a formative, international dimension to their studies.

## 1.6 Teaching staff

### Standard:

Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff, including field practitioners who support the development of learners and value their own continuous self-development.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
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### Evidence and Analysis

The teaching staff are motivated and have good practical skills.

The panel read that the number of qualified teaching staff members employed by the College is sufficient for the achievement of curriculum objectives and learning outcomes as well as ensuring the quality and sustainability of teaching and learning.

Prior to the review the number of academic staff positions open at the College was 72. Open competitions for teaching staff positions take place each spring. The average number of applicants per post has been 2.46 in 2014-2018 and had grown to 4.92 by Spring 2019. However some lecturer positions remained unfilled. Personnel recruitment is typically initiated by the head of the relevant study department. Qualification requirements for ordinary and visiting teaching staff at Tartu Health Care College are set by the College Council. The College has made efforts to attract international academic staff, especially in view of the opening of new master programmes (2018). As of May 2019 the College's aim to have 1.25 FTE College professors has only resulted in a 0.5FTE position from a visiting professor from UK. There has been an increasing use of subject experts in committees responsible for the evaluation of teaching. They are employed on the basis of authorization agreements. (n = 299 in 2014, n= 345 in 2018). Also international lecturers are recruited by using own funding as well as the resources of the ASTRA programme.

Staff workload is mapped and managed systematically. This enables lecturer roles to be planned flexibly in a way that reflects the individual preferences and enthusiasm of staff in relation to teaching, RDC, services to society, etc. Academic staff also have an opportunity for a regular sabbatical of a single semester without teaching responsibilities. Teaching staff are aware of this although this opportunity is not widely taken.

A full-time lecturer workload includes 40 hours for self-improvement and, additionally, up to 120 hours for a teacher to engage in doctoral studies (over the year). To support the development of practical skills staff have the opportunity to take forty hours every three years to train in a working environment. There are signs that overall academic staffing is not properly balanced between full-time (42%) and part-time (58%) workload. The panel recognised the value to students of the practical experience that part-time staff bring from their other professional roles, but the balance should be re-considered. The preponderance of part-time staff also generates problems. These include challenges in timely publishing of a teaching timetable that is both complete and unlikely to change during the course of teaching. Students indicate that this challenge has not always been met effectively.

Furthermore, some teaching staff indicate problems in internal communication, linked to quality management processes and development of curricula.

College policy supports the participation of teachers in activities concerning their professional development, including master and doctoral studies, international mobility, RDC activities and the development of pedagogical skills. Annual development interviews and related individual workload planning are used systematically to achieve this. Lecturer's training needs are planned in the annual development interview based on their duties and needs for personal and professional development. As of 31.12.2018 eight teaching staff members (9%) were engaged in doctoral studies and seven members (7%) were engaged in master's studies (SER).

The panel heard that teachers tend to seek development in professional fields rather than in other ways. In the period 2016-18, the College carried out 13 joint training sessions for the development of pedagogical skills, six of which were conducted by international experts. This includes developing competence in the use of educational technologies as well as simulation-based teacher training. Teaching staff also have the opportunity to visit each other's lessons and to share good practice in this way; an opportunity that many staff take.

Teachers collaborate in development of curricula, assessment methods and the conduct of assessment. Novice teachers have mentoring made available for them, but this is not mandatory and not all teachers make use of it. The development of pedagogical skill is supervised mostly by lead teachers. However, it is not systematically embedded across all programmes and teaching staff.

The participation of teachers in various mobility programmes, projects and networks is highly valued within the College and there are many good examples of collaboration in fields of teaching, research and creative activity with different Estonian partners. The extent of participation in international mobility is constrained by financial limitations, other duties or sometimes of insufficient language skills. More opportunities for interprofessional and international learning experiences should be created and implemented in teaching practice.

In recent years levels of student satisfaction with the theoretical and practical skills of teaching staff has been consistently high as measured by questionnaires (4,0-4,3 on a 5-point scale). This point is underlined by students, alumni and employers in interviews (VET and HE) and provides evidence that students are prepared to a high level for professional practice and work.

In 2020 a new evaluation system for teachers will be put into practice for the first time.

### Commendations

- The panel has seen a highly motivated staff. Academic and administrative staff are working hard and dedicated to deliver graduates that are well prepared for professional practice and work.
- The College supports lifelong learning and development of teaching staff.

### Area of concern and recommendations

- There are signs of an imbalance between full-time and part-time staff numbers. The panel recommends increasing the percentage of teaching staff with a full-time workload. More full-

time staff will make it easier to develop the curriculum, RD and pedagogical skills systematically.

### Suggestions for further improvement

- Pedagogical development is not undertaken systematically across all programmes and all teaching staff. Regular staff development to improve both pedagogical and professional skills is recommended for all teaching staff because it is not systematically embedded across all programmes and teaching staff.
- The results of the annual staff review process should enable staff to determine the ways in which they specialise, whether focusing on services to the community, pedagogical innovation or research, and how to focus on the nexus between research and teaching.
- The approach to enabling staff to acquire PhDs should be systematic and it should be deeply embedded in the College's life. This is a high priority because resources are required for masters teaching and RD across the institution.
- Training in language skills should be improved to enable international mobility, especially in English.

## 1.7 Study programme

### Standard:

Study programmes are designed and developed while taking into account the expectations of stakeholders, higher education and professional standards, and trends in the relevant fields. The objectives of study programmes, modules and courses and their planned learning outcomes are specific and coherent. The study programmes support creativity, entrepreneurship and development of other general competencies.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

THCC offers six professional higher education curricula, one master's programme and five vocational training curricula. In 2016–2018 the master's programme in Health Sciences and two new vocational training curricula (Client Worker for Mental Health Problems and Masseur/Masseuse) were opened at the College.

Development of curricula and conduct of studies are governed by the Estonian Qualifications Framework and its requirements for work at each level. They are also governed by the specific objectives established by the College's 2015-20 development plan and allied strategic documents. Furthermore, the College makes use of information and experience gained from participation in international networks, projects and research studies. The College works collaboratively on

curriculum development and research with several organisations and institutions in accord with the needs of the labour market and relevant legal acts.

Close contact with employers enables the College to remain informed about needs for change, ensuring flexible development of curricula that meet the needs of the labour market. The College analyses continuously and takes into account learner feedback on curriculum development.

The panel read that the curricula at THCC are outcome-based and follow constructivist learning principles as described in the lifelong learning strategy. General curriculum learning outcomes are in accord with learning outcomes at the professional higher education level as determined in the higher education standard as well as with the source documents of the curricula.

The implementation of constructivist learning principles is not consistent across the College. The panel did not find a strategic approach to steer this implementation systematically and so, while some programmes have worked a lot on learning outcomes, others have not done as much.

Studies are organised according to a module-based course system. Curricula are built on the implementation and deepening of prior knowledge and skills through study; a student has an opportunity to implement his acquired knowledge and skills in pre-clinical practicums as well as in a practical work situation and to reflect on his or her own performance and development in the course of the study process. Interconnectedness of theoretical studies and practical training support each learner's development, and reflection on the experience gives an opportunity to set goals for further development. Development of the general competences of learners is integrated into different modules within curricula. Here also there is no strategic steering and every programme can choose which general competences it should seek to develop. In that way some curricula have a greater focus on these topics while others have less.

Students are very satisfied with the study programme. The workload seems to be appropriate (conforming to 1 ECTS for 26 student learning hours of the student) and students did not complain that it was excessive.

### Commendations

- Students are well prepared for professional practice and work.
- The expectations and needs of stakeholders and students are met effectively through curricula and both employers and students are satisfied with them.

## 1.8 Learning and teaching

### Standard:

Admissions requirements and procedures ensure fair access to higher education and the formation of a motivated student body. The higher education institution systematically implements a student-centred approach that guides students to take responsibility for their studies and career planning, and supports creativity and innovation. Graduates of the higher education institution, with their professional knowledge and social skills, are competitive both nationally and internationally.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

Admission is well regulated as is evident from the College's "Rules of Student Admissions". The communication manager is responsible for dissemination of information, communicating with schools. The panel read that applicants can find information about admission on the website, and also via social media (e.g. Facebook).

The College participates in education fairs, career days and open door days for prospective students. These activities are organized in collaboration with partners in the hospitals in Tallinn. Health awareness workshops have become very popular (total number of participants 2014-2018 approx. 1000); they are organized with the help of resources from the gambling tax council. Student shadowing is available for potential applicants throughout the year. In 2018 this opportunity was taken by 117 persons who chose to take a close look at student life.

The College has signed collaboration agreements with eight gymnasia. The purpose of these agreements include promoting awareness of and interest in study in the fields of medicine and health care. The panel read that the College offers various health awareness promotion packages to gymnasia. These packages provide some theoretical knowledge and also practical skills. The most popular packages include first aid (16 hours), physiology and biochemistry (16 hours), health training (32 hours) and health awareness (21 hours). The panel concluded that the provision of these packages is an element of good practice in the College's activities.

Admissions take place twice a year: in June-July and December-January. Admission numbers for all curricula are approved by the training committee for health care workers in the MoSA. Admission to the Nursing and Midwifery curricula are regulated until the year 2020 by the consensus agreement that was signed by the MoER, MoSA, Estonian Hospitals' Association and health care colleges of Tartu and Tallinn in 2016.

Admission is based on the results of an admission test that can also be taken outside the College if needed or if more convenient for applicants. For the Biomedical Laboratory Science curriculum applicants have an admission interview. Employer representatives are involved in the Admission Committee.

Satisfaction with the admission process is high among admitted students; their proposals in this area relate mainly to the preliminary information provided about the admission test and its structure.

At the beginning of an academic year the admission process is analysed and a survey carried out among the admitted students to measure their satisfaction with the admissions process. If needed, proposals are made to the college council to make changes in the organization, rules or some other aspect of the admissions.

### **Organization of studies**

Two high priorities in the organisation of studies are expanding the range of study methods and effective provision of part-time studies. Studies on all vocational training curricula are organized in such a way as to facilitate combining study with work and family life; in "sessions".

Until 2016 studies in nursing curricula with a shortened study period were organized in sessions and from the academic year 2016/2017 studies of those nursing and biomedical laboratory science students admitted in winter are organized in the same way. Interest in session-based studies among potential applicants is high. The age profile of students admitted to the College is increasing (the percentage of students admitted to the nursing curriculum directly from gymnasia has reduced from 61% in 2017 to 56% in 2018). This change has prompted a decision to organize session-based studies for one group of nursing students commencing their studies in the autumn of 2019. In the previous academic year (2018/2019) a part-time study option was opened for the physiotherapy curriculum. Part-time studies are also planned for master level students along with a plan to analyse the possibility of implementing part-time study for professional higher education students.

Students are very positive about most elements of the College's learning environment. This includes the variety of different teaching and learning methods; the integration of theoretical learning and practical skills; the well functioning library; the availability of high quality syllabi and learning materials; and the sufficiency of places in which students can engage in independent learning. However, students noted a lack of space for group work.

The panel heard from students that they welcome the College's provision of individually tailored programmes for many students.

The panel read that students are provided with effective opportunities for reflection and feedback on their studies as a means to support self-directed learning. Various active learning methods are also used to integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes. This includes learning groups, experience sharing, problem-based learning, case-based learning, and digital studies. However, the extent and effectiveness of the College's implementation of active learning methods is unclear and still needs to be explored.

The development of digital studies at the College is led by a learning designer who supervises and supports teaching staff and learners.

The panel formed the view that the learning environment is generally student-centred.

All students are provided with a place in a practice institution for practical training. To guarantee the quality of the practice places the College has signed contracts. Each training place has a supervisor who is working together with the College supervisor to teach the student.

Teachers have close connections with hospitals. If there are complaints then they visit the relevant

hospital to communicate with supervisors and resolve the problem.

To improve the supervision of practical training, supervisor training was introduced in 2006. The training aims to ensure that supervisors are able to implement supervision methods that suit outcome-based practical training. However, the panel became aware that not every supervisor has undertaken these professionalization sessions, and the panel judged that this training should be obligatory to ensure a consistent level of quality.

To improve the quality of training and to support supervisors, introductory seminars for practical training are organized in hospitals. These seminars involve not only supervisors but also College teachers and students. As of 01.10.2018 those seminars had involved 55 supervisors in hospitals and feedback given by the hospitals is very positive.

An effective collaboration with practice institutions is considered essential by the College. A research study began in 2018 to explore student learning in a practice environment. The research results will be used in the development of curricula. Preliminary research results have already provided an input for the development of practical training documentation.

Doctoral students work in close relation with their supervisors. 120 hours/year can be dedicated to PhD work. PhD students are also supported by stipends and are encouraged and supported to be involved in international collaboration as much as possible. Most have international experience.

### **Graduates**

In 2018, 96% of THCC graduates were employed or involved in study at a higher level. The average for all higher education institutions (HEIs) (including universities) is 83%. The proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is also high (77%), and is the second best of the 12 higher education institutions in Estonia, where on average only 50% of students graduate in this period. A survey conducted in 2019 in Estonia among 2500 employees demonstrated that graduates of THCC find a good job more easily than graduates of other Estonian HEIs (94% of respondents found work within a few months after graduation).

### **Commendations**

- Student shadowing is available for potential applicants throughout the year. In 2018 this opportunity was taken by 117 persons who chose to take a close look at student life. The panel found this a good practice.
- The panel concluded that the provision of packages to possible students before admission is an element of good practice in the College's activities.

### **Areas of concern and recommendations**

- The extent and effectiveness of the College's implementation of active learning methods is unclear and still needs to be explored.
- The training of supervisors is good but the College should ensure that pedagogical training for hospital teachers is obligatory.

## 1.9 Student assessment

### Standard:

Assessments of students, including recognition of their prior learning and work experiences, support the process of learning and are consistent with expected learning outcomes. The objectivity and reliability of student assessments are ensured.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Evidence and Analysis

From the Self-Evaluation Report the analyses of that recognition of students prior learning and work experiences could be read (p 54-55). There is procedure in place to recognising prior learning and work experience towards the completion of the study programme. Every semester by submission deadline the recognition of prior learning and professional experience (RPL) is carried out using SIS. The THCC Study Regulations Annex 3 gives the procedure for this. During the interviews it was confirmed that the RPL system is mostly used for gaining credit points connected to practical modules. The same applied for international study visits. The Self-Evaluation Report stated that the number of RPL applications has raised and percentage of denials has increased. VET students explained during the discussion that the submission is denied when relevant documentation is missing. In THCC Study Regulations annex 3 is stated in point 11.2 “/.../ analysis of professional experience; a copy of the job description, the employment contract or the employment record book; or a certificate about the work in an institution and an assessment provided by the direct supervisor or a portfolio. In same document point 22 “/.../ the committee may ask the applicant to submit additional documents (e.g. a portfolio), perform a practical task and/or take part in an interview.” Due to this regulation it is unclear what are the assessment criteria to evaluate the practice related learning outcomes in curricula.

Students are informed in the beginning of the course about the assessed tasks and their criteria. There are good examples where alignment between learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment is clearly defined and written down in subject programmes by teachers in VET as well as in HE programmes (e.g. module in VET called Implementation of Technologies during digital era).

In radiography curriculum assessment method Objective Structured Clinical Examination has been implemented and from interviews with panel it became clear that, as a result, changes in teaching and curriculum development have been made. THCC has carried out training to support competencies of teaching staff and staff is satisfied with it. Evidence is found that members of the teaching staff in radiography curriculum cooperate in defining assessment criteria. Teachings staff in VET apply similar approaches for assessing students' practical skills using performance-based checklist.

Assessment methods listed in VET module implementation plans and HE programmes are versatile and relevant for learning outcomes. Implementing them on criterion referencing manner would allow to assess the degree of achievement of learning outcomes (including general competencies). Exams in the end of modules and final exams, and also final theses, are assessed by more than one staff member. Practical training assessments student, a supervisor in the practical institution and the

supervising teacher take part. Students were satisfied with feedback they get for assessed tasks and believed it supports their individual development.

However, not all curricula and subject syllabi are checked systematically to make sure that assessment criteria of learning outcomes are coherent with learning outcomes and assessment tasks at the subject, module and curriculum level.

Not all teachers might be able to develop descriptive criterion referencing assessment matrices for assessment tasks for assessing competences. More work needs to be done to build fair and feed-forward assessment at competences level in THCC. This includes defining and providing transparent assessment criteria comprehensively across programmes and courses. Criteria for judgement have to be defined. In the opinion of the panel the recommendation of the previous panel 2012 must be repeated: “The college would benefit from the development of guidelines and policy rules for quality control of the assessment.” Further training of staff in this area is recommended.

Current assessment criteria are too general to guide learning in VET. In higher education, the subject syllabus must show coherent connection of learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment tasks and criteria. Clear guidelines, policy rules and teachers’ trainings for raising the quality of assessments at institutional level would be beneficial.

Students and alumni are satisfied with the assessments. Students are aware of their rights and obligations, including the procedures for challenges regarding assessments. Teaching staff as well is positive about how the assessments are carried out and criteria made clear for students. Employers are generally satisfied that THCC graduates are of high quality and notable for the typically higher level of their practical skills. The panel has questions about the transparency of the criteria for evaluation. The panel has not seen in all programmes the use of criteria for assessment tasks to judge the learning outcomes, neither a system to control the quality of the assessment methods.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- THCC should ensure that assessment criteria are well-known by all students and teachers involved in the study process. Assessment criteria need to be articulated at the right level to guide learning. The panel formed a view that at present the only assessment criteria available are too general. Subject syllabi should make explicit the alignment between learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment tasks and criteria. THCC should review all module-based, learning outcome based curricula to ensure that assessment methods and criteria are appropriate to area across the College. A clear evaluation process and division of responsibilities should be designed to evaluate new assessment methods in alignment with learning outcomes and teaching methods. Since teachers are free to create assessment tasks appropriate to their courses, regular staff development training and updating of skills should be undertaken to ensure that all teachers develop clearly and consistently criterion-referenced assessments.
- The Objectively Structured Clinical Exam should be used in a wider range of vocational and higher education curricula. The panel welcomes the use of OSCE within the College as an effective means to provide feedback on teaching activities. OSCE cases should be designed to assess a comprehensive set of competencies, not only professional but also general.

## 1.10 Learning support systems

### Standard:

The higher education institution ensures that all students have access to academic, career and psychological counselling. Students' individual development and academic progress are monitored and supported.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
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### Evidence and Analysis

Functional learning support systems are vitally important to ensure a personal approach to every student. The panel found that THCC assists many of its students to develop an individual study programme. The panel read and heard that individual study programmes are produced when needed in circumstances such as maternity leave or student difficulties leading to a lack of academic progress. Approximately 10% of THCC students are working on individual study programmes. The institution shows flexibility whenever it is judged to be required and reasonable. The panel heard from those designing study programmes that, unfortunately, the institution does not provide individual programmes for disabled students since many disabilities are not compatible with the professional role in a regulated profession that the College is training its students to perform. The panel advises to make regulations so that the possibility is created to admit disabled students in the future.

The College interviews students in order to provide information to advise them as they find practical places for training. The College ensures that students gain a range of experience, requiring them to undertake practical training in a different department each year. Sometimes it is difficult to find enough places, especially in the region of Tartu. The panel heard from some students who have to travel a long distance to practical training placements and find this a problem.

The overall employment rate of the graduates is high (96%) most likely due to the labour shortage in the medical field in Estonia and the practical training that is carried out by potential employers. It has become evident that the College's careers activities begin in the first year as prospective employers come in to introduce opportunities to students and "careers days" are run in the College.

It was mentioned by those responsible for learning support systems that the institution has had a new psychologist – who is not a teacher in the College – since May 2019. Psychological support is provided to all students who need it, including international students. Studies Specialists have also had counselling training and are able to make referrals. The panel judged that the system of psychological counselling is working well.

The College has listed systematic support of international students as one of its areas for improvement. The panel agrees with this and believes that the institution is ready to develop this support in order to improve its internationalisation activity. According to the self-evaluation report all international students have a week of adjustment after their arrival and practical training supervision is provided as needed. However, the panel noted that international students, like Estonian students, receive no individual career counselling.

Analysis of the reasons why students drop out and withdraw is important for the institution. Reasons for discontinuation of studies are monitored by the Studies Specialists. The panel read that yearly withdrawal rates remain near 10% with most withdrawals occurring during the first year of study. Based on answers provided by the Studies Specialist, the main reasons a student will withdraw are first the unsuitability of the speciality which they have been following, and second insufficient academic progress. The most common reason for withdrawing from vocational education is the difficulties of balancing study, work and family life faced by more mature students.

The institution (studies specialists, heads of departments) attempt to reduce withdrawal rates by monitoring each learner's development. An improved questionnaire is also being developed to help the College understand the problems students have more fully. If a student lags behind then an open discussion is started and a revised timetable proposed. Academic leave and psychological counselling are also proposed as needed to provide complete support to the student.

The panel read that students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities and initiatives within civil society. The College supports learners' participation in training and sports events and provides a gym at the College for student use. Students are involved in transformative learning (teaching within society in events such as open public breast cancer workshops); see more under standard 12: *Service to society*). Students also participate in the College's "health days" that provide services to the community.

The College monitors student satisfaction with counselling services, however the evidence suggested to the panel that the process of reviewing and enhancing these services should be more systematic and detailed. The impression was given in meetings with the panel that changes are often made *ad hoc* in response to particular needs rather than as the result of a systematic process of enhancement, and that students and graduates are not always informed about the results of the surveys in which they have participated and the actions that have been taken as a result of those surveys.

The Department of Academic Affairs is presently being evaluated, results are not yet available, as is stated in the self evaluation report. The panel formed the view that this Department should take a more pro-active approach to the prevention of study problems. At present the department functions reactively. A particular area of concern for the Department is the prevention of withdrawals and more attention should be given to this issue. For example, support systems can be created in the first year and a greater emphasis can be placed on study skills training.

### Commendation

- The panel commends the institution for taking a personal approach to students. The system of providing individual learning plans is effective in addressing the needs of students and is appreciated by them. This system should continue. The College should continue to be proactive in managing the complexity that arises from individual learning plans.

### Area of concern and recommendations

- Currently the institution does not provide individual programmes for disabled students since many disabilities are not compatible with the professional role in a regulated profession that the College is training its students to perform. The panel strongly advises to make such regulations so that the possibility is created to admit disabled students in the future.

**Suggestions for further improvement**

- Although counselling is typically not needed to ensure that a person will find a job, it is still very important that people know what type of job best fits them so that they can find their way to the specialism and role that suits them best. Thus, individual career counselling should be provided systematically for students (including international students) and alumni.
- The panel suggests introducing admission interviews to all programmes in order to map learners’ expectations and motivations from the start and thereby to enable students to be guided in ways that will reduce the likelihood of withdrawal.
- The department of academic affairs should be more pro-actively oriented. This is especially true when aiming for early detection of students with problems. It is important to detect problems early in the academic year if possible and to provide remedial help with learning and study skills as well as with other competencies, such as time management.

## 1.11 Research, development and/or other creative activity

**Standard:**

The higher education institution has defined its objectives and focus in the fields of RDC based on its mission, as well as on the expectations and future needs of society, and assesses their implementation and the societal impact of its RDC activities. RDC supports the process of teaching and learning at the higher education institution. Support services for RDC are purposeful and support implementation of the objectives of the core process.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
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**Evidence and Analysis**

The panel read in SER that the College’s RDC priorities are the study process, health, and evidence-based development of the profession. However, the panel found no evidence that prioritisation of activities within this area has taken place; that the College’s activities are driven by these priorities, or that they are widely known. The College does not classify previous or present RDC activity according to these priorities. Evidence of strategic steering towards these priorities is vague or absent. During interviews with the panel nobody was able to repeat the research priorities and so the panel formed the impression that this area is made up of a series of activities that are not strategically guided. The College undertakes a wide variety of research studies and development projects at both national and international levels and staff involved are highly motivated, involving students. However, most research is conducted purely as a result of the interests of individual staff members and so the College’s research profile is not strategically constrained and driven.

THCC Quality Manual states that research and development projects are carried out to provide evidence-based development of professional activity and study processes in collaboration with different interest groups. In addition to that, the objective of project activities is to develop learning environments and curricula through projects, implementing lifelong learning and promoting internationalization. The Quality Manual contains for those processes descriptions for process parts, activities, responsibilities, indicators, timing and documents. Achievement of the College's RDC goals is measured by quantitative indicators. For example, the development plan specifies that in 2020 there will be four research and development projects and the competence centre has a goal to produce at least seven commissioned research studies. One content area is explicitly stated in the development plan: patient safety. A goal is set for an average of 100 publications in the Estonian Research Information System on average per year. However, no requirements are set for the publication quality. The College has recognized the need to set a goal for high-quality academic articles.

The College systematically assesses the implementation of its RDC activities by following its publications in ETIS. The number of high level-publications has increased from eight in 2014 to thirteen in 2018. There is also evidence of an increase in the number of presentations given at national and international seminars and conferences by THCC teachers from 32 in 2015 to 67 in 2018. This addresses a key indicator in the Development Plan.

Results of research are disseminated through the College's own activities as well as through international conferences and journal publication. Research activity is communicated and popularised among a wider audience through the College's web-magazine "Tervist!". High quality scientific posters are also placed around the walls of the College to communicate research results and to motivate students to be involved in research. This proactive approach to research demonstrates THCC's leading role in Estonia and compares favourably to that of other, similar institutions.

The College's RDC projects support curricular development and results are used in teaching, but there is no systematic integration of research with the educational process. The College values students' involvement in research studies and teachers engage some students in their research and development projects. Student research studies are also integrated in the curriculum. The panel read that one highlight in this area was the award of an international prize to a final thesis. The panel formed the view that if smaller projects involving students were run in the context of the community services provided by the College then this would create a much larger number of good opportunities for student involvement that connect community services, teaching, and research in productive ways. The College is in a strong position to take this step given the range and number of community services projects that it is currently running.

The panel read that in 2008 the College established organisational structures and a Research Board to support its RDC activities. More recently the Board has been modernised, being renamed the Research and Development Board and including representation from all professional HE curricula. It no longer assesses research plans. The Board engages in a wide range of activities, but the panel did not find evidence that it has addressed strategic, management and practical activities during its first year. The panel takes the view that a Board of this kind should be supporting staff in writing research proposals and seeking external national and international funding. This requires professional research support services, but there was no evidence that these are in place or planned.

### Commendations

- The College publishes quite widely and seeks to popularize the research it conducts.

- College research has an impact on the quality of student learning outcomes as evidenced by an awarded prize and other forms of recognition.

**Areas of concern and recommendations**

- Evidence on the College’s RDC prioritisation according to named focus areas was not provided. Evidence of strategic steering towards these priorities is vague as well as assessment of the impact of the named priorities. The College should make visible its prioritization of RDC for the community and the staff.
- There was no evidence provided on the supports system for RCD. Practical support in searching financing for research projects and to helping with writing proposals for national and international grants should be organized for the staff members on the areas prioritized.

**Suggestion for further improvement**

- The functions of the Research and Development Board have been redefined. However the panel suggests the College to consider how the strategic decisions and prioritizing of research activities should be organized to steer RDC activities and decisions.

## 1.12 Service to society

<p><b>Standard:</b></p> <p>The higher education institution initiates and implements development activities, which enhance prosperity in the community and disseminate recent know-how in the areas of the institution’s competence. The higher education institution, as a learning-oriented organisation, promotes lifelong learning in society and creates high-quality opportunities for that.</p>
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conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
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**Evidence and Analysis**

The panel read that, in the period 2015 to 2020, THCC has moved from a College-based to a society-based approach. The College offers a wide range of services through practical activities performed by students. These activities are linked to the various subjects studied in the students’ curricula. The College’s aim is to influence health behaviours within the community and to raise awareness of health issues in the community. These activities are conducted in collaboration with various partners, such as Tartu City Government, TUH, Science Centre AHHA, the ENU, the Estonian Academic Sports Federation, and general education schools.

THCC created its Competence Centre in the academic year 2017-18. The Centre offers experiential learning not only to students, but also to specialists who are life-long learners and for members of the wider community. The Centre enables the College to develop and extend its research activity in

collaboration with enterprise and to be a centre that develops entrepreneurship among young specialists. The panel read of several good examples of services provided to the community. The panel heard that both students and teachers are enthusiastic about this new transformative learning format, which the panel judges to be good practice.

THCC can take a lead role in the implementation of new teaching methods such as transformative learning and it can work on sustainability in the society by creating for each student a sustainability learning pathway. For this evolution close cooperation with stakeholders will be necessary to become new streams of financing to make this format of research feasible.

By sharing its resources and providing consulting and advisory services, THCC contributes to the development of health within the community. The College organises many events in the community, including conferences, fairs, open days, festival. In 2015 THCC was awarded the title of “Education Deed of the Year” for its promotion of health awareness and healthy behaviour in Estonian society. In 2016 the institution celebrated its 205<sup>th</sup> anniversary with 148 activities in the community involving more than 8000 people in the community. The panel read that delivery of these activities involved 38% of College staff and 12% of students.

The aim of the Open College is to provide life-long learning. The panel read that the College offers many training courses that are designed in response to the needs of the labour market and the development of health care in Estonia. Teachers, students and alumni were extremely positive and motivated and showed a lot of creativity and innovation. However clear goals should be set for this work and the training should be offered that is deliberately designed to ensure that those objectives are met.

Some alumni are involved in promoting the institution in the wider community and providing feedback, which is used to solve problems and enhance the performance of the institution.

Teaching staff are engaged in working groups and networks in Estonia and internationally. They also work in development teams related to the professional standards that are addressed within particular curricula and in other national and international bodies as experts in their fields. This participation in the promotion of internationalisation, community services, and research and development activities is taken into account in the annual evaluation of teachers work.

The number of participants in in-service training has been stable over the years but interest in state-funding training for those who themselves supervise practical training has significantly increased (from under €10,000 to €25,000). The panel read that feedback on in-service training courses provided by the Open College in 2016-2018 has mostly been positive. The well equipped skills laboratories are available for undertaking the practical activities included in this training. The needs of the participants are taken into account to develop and deliver new in-service training programmes.

### Commendation

- The College is aware that it has a role as a health developer within wider society and it undertakes a large number of community activities of different types in order to fulfil this role.

### ★ Worthy of Recognition:

#### Community services

THCC offers a wide range of services to society through practical activities performed by students in society. The aim of the College is to guide the health behaviour of the community members. This can be labelled as a good practice and when connected to research activities in society can be labelled as

transformative learning. In doing so each student can have a sustainable learning pathway. No so much higher education institutions in the world can offer this to their students.

### Suggestions for further improvement

- The College should systematically implement the teaching formats and pathways required by transformative learning and it should exploit the potential that this brings.
- The College's extensive work in wider society should be exploited to enable a greater number and breadth of research projects to be undertaken.

## 2. Assessment findings of the sample of the study programmes in higher education

The committee evaluates samples of study programmes during accreditation process to evaluate the implementation of principles and regulations for studies valid at the HEI level and the functioning of the internal evaluation system of study programmes at the HEI.

Study programme group	Study programme	Level
Health Sciences	Midwifery	Professional Higher Education
	Biomedical Laboratory Science	Professional Higher Education
	Environmental Health Specialist	Professional Higher Education

### 2.1 Environmental Health Specialist programme

#### General information:

In 1990 the training of assistant sanitary doctors came to an end as there was no state-commissioned education. In 2002 the training of environmental health specialists was again started at the professional higher education level at Tartu Medical School. The curriculum consisting of 180 ECTS is studied over a standard period of 3 years.

The Department of Physiotherapy and Environmental Health has 13.75FTE (full time equivalent) staff positions available, but at present the department has only 12FTE staff positions filled by fifteen persons including seven teaching staff members in the field of environmental health. The current level of staffing is sufficient given that the institution also has agreements in place with external specialists in the field.

## Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s) in higher education.
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

### Evidence and Analysis

Curriculum development starts with an analysis of the needs of the Estonian workforce as expressed by local employers. All curricula at THCC are designed and developed through intensive collaboration with representatives of the labour market (Health Board, Labour Inspectorate). Due attention is also given to relevant legislation; international organizations such as EFEH and IFEH; recommendations arising from external evaluations; changes in the organization of studies; and the College's approach to lifelong learning. A directive of the rector regulates the development, evaluation and quality assurance of programmes by curriculum boards. These boards include teachers, employers, professional associations and students, among others.

The panel read and heard that surveys are undertaken on an annual basis with students and graduates and biennially with employers. Survey results inform subsequent curriculum changes. The panel read several examples of curriculum developments driven by learner feedback and the results of research. The curriculum development process also includes consideration of equivalent programmes at other institutions (e.g. Public Health at the University of Tartu and Master in Ergonomics at the Estonian University of Life Sciences, Health Management at Haapsalu College and Health Promotion at Tallinn Healthcare College). This consideration allows the College to define the place of their curriculum in the wider health care sector. The panel also read that the curriculum is relevant to and aligned with the requirements of society (*Rahvastiku tervise arengukava 2020-2030*).

The panel read and heard that all teaching staff members have been involved in research activity since early 2019. The curriculum is evidence-based and several relevant examples of research studies were provided to the panel. The department's teachers are valued as experts in scientific committees nationally and internationally. While results of research studies are incorporated in the curriculum, this is not a systematic practice. However, the College promotes its research in a range of ways including disseminating results to gymnasia (5 general education schools).

Some students are engaged in research activity. The panel read that by the time they graduate, these students have had sufficient experience of the planning and conduct of research and sufficient training in data analysis to enable them to study at a higher level. In response to the need for higher qualified staff in the labour market, the College began to collaborate with the University of Tartu in 2018 to enable graduates of THCC to begin studies at master's level.

Indicators of the quality of the final theses include their publication as research articles or newspapers. The panel also read that a number of final theses have also been awarded prizes in international student conferences and student competitions.

In 2016 the curriculum learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment were evaluated in light of the results of the previous assessment panel, feedback from students and employers, and changes to Health Board work domains. The evaluation also took into account various pedagogical developments, including the decision to harmonise the volume of research methods and final theses preparation; the addition of entrepreneurship and career planning as a taught subject in order to support the development of general competences. Changes were also made to facilitate student mobility. Finally, the most important change was the increase in the volume of practical training by 10.5 ECTS.

The programme is cohesive vertically (in terms of level) and horizontally (in terms of content) and includes the effective integration of theory and practice. Diverse teaching and learning methods are employed, including active methods and methods that support independent student learning.

The inclusion of entrepreneurship and career planning was included into the curriculum and is organised with practical training in the private sector. The programme does not yet include interprofessional training in collaboration with other curricula.

The learning environment is student centred, including well equipped laboratories and practical training rooms. The College lacks a long-term plan for the allocation of financial resources to address the needs of different curricula.

### Suggestions for further improvement

- In several interviews the question was raised how the College is prepared for the digital transformation in health care globally, Estonia being a worldwide leader. Health care professionals need more digital and social skills to adapt to the situation where patients are more informed and engaged in their health care process because of digital tools. The interviewees agreed this transition is going on, but stated the College has lack of funding to adapt its curricula accordingly. Curriculum development takes into account the needs of the labour market, but more attention should be paid to the consistent embedding of new innovations in the scientific field of environmental health sciences in the curriculum. Here we do not mean changes that are being made on the basis of the surveys of students, but innovation in the content of the curriculum and changes made on the basis of international evolutions (new theoretical approaches, new insights, new domains, new technology etc.).
- The nexus between research and teaching should be strengthened and made more visible in the curriculum.

## Learning, teaching and assessment

- Students' choice of specialisation is supported. Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

### Evidence and Analysis

The procedure is transparent and fair. Students can prepare themselves during their last year of gymnasium and they have the opportunity to take part in a student shadowing scheme to enable them to choose the specialisation that best fits them.

Because student numbers are small it is easy to take an individual approach to students, providing individual study plans, psychological counselling, additional explanations etc. Students with special needs have the opportunity to take exams at times that suit them better, working with independent learning assignments, elective courses and subjects, and taking e-courses in English.

Although the panel was not initially provided with details of the outcome based approach to the curriculum, the panel was provided with evidence during the visit of the learning outcomes set at programme level and also those for several syllabi at course level. Programme level learning outcomes are aligned with teaching and learning and assessment methods. However, this alignment is not evident in all courses.

More attention should be paid to assessment criteria, which are mostly not made explicit and not known by the students. More transparency in this domain is needed. This is a request that was also made by the previous accreditation panel in 2012, and so it should be resolved quickly, effectively and transparently.

The panel found that levels of student satisfaction with the programme are high. Students are very enthusiastic and confirm that the learning environment is student centred. According to some students there are not enough space to work in smaller groups.

Practical training is mostly well-organised. Some students complain because they are unable to do their practical training placement in Tartu and they therefore have to travel a long distance to get to the practical training.

Teachers at the training placement are well prepared for their task. Some have followed an in-service training programme to enable them to coach the students better, making use of observation and

feedback. This training programme should be obligatory for all placement teachers. Placement logbooks are now in digital form and this is a positive step.

Each practical training session is supervised by a teacher who collaborates closely with the practice institution. The panel heard that teachers visit placement institutions before training begins. If a student complains about the placement then the teacher will also visit to solve the problem.

The individual development and progress of each student is followed by a Study Advisor and the study information system provides information to guide follow-up of students. However, this is a reactive approach that only addresses problems once they arise and students come in to the Department for Academic Affairs. A more proactive and preventative system is required. The results of the recent evaluation of the Department of Academic Affairs are not known for the moment. The panel found no evidence that the installation of this new structure has remedied the problems with the organization of study.

Teachers have opportunities to go abroad to international conferences and workshops. Students are able to take 10 ECTS in English, taught by a visiting lecturer (food hygiene and safety, indoor climate of schools and kindergartens).

From all it read and heard from students, graduates and employers, the panel judged that THCC produces high-quality graduates. Although most graduates find jobs easily, the EHS employment rate is only 75% (30 out of 40). The panel was concerned that there should be systematic follow-up of students after graduation to ensure that any help required to find a job is given.

#### Areas of concern and recommendations

- The quality of assessment across the programme should be more carefully controlled. The panel recommends that the College ensures that all teachers can develop descriptive criterion-referenced assessment matrices for assessment tasks. This was also a recommendation of the previous assessment team in 2012 and the panel found that it still needs to be addressed.
- Criteria for the judgement of assessment tasks should be made explicit, being included in the syllabi, so that assessment is transparent for the students.
- The training of supervisors in practical settings should be obligatory for all.

## Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The development of the teaching staff depends on the needs of the study programmes and students as well as on the feedback from all parties and self-evaluation. The effectiveness of studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

### Evidence and Analysis

Seven members of teaching staff are principally employed on the curriculum of environmental health, including three members with a doctoral degree and one member engaged in doctoral studies. The total staffing amounts to 6.5 FTE.

Teachers integrate academic ethics into their teaching and assessment practice, mostly in the format of case-based learning. Students confirm that case-based learning is used in the teaching of ethics. However, they are unclear about the difference between academic ethics and professional ethics and the code of ethics as such is not well known.

In 2021 the fourth conference IFEH Academic World Conference on Environmental Health will be held in Estonia. International collaboration for research topics will be one of the goals during this conference.

The panel heard during interviews that teaching staff work well as a team. Outcome-based curriculum development requires cooperation and collaboration between teachers and it is clear that this is present. The panel met with very enthusiastic, highly motivated teachers. The College's monthly briefings are seen as an effective tool that supports the integration of the team and especially part-time teachers.

Evaluation of teachers is based on student satisfaction surveys and annual developmental interviews in which the goals for teaching, research, community services and internationalization are determined and evaluated. These processes will be revisited according to the new employment legislation.

### Commendations

- A significant proportion of teachers on the programme have PhD degrees.
- There is evidence of effective collaboration between teachers in curriculum innovation.

### Suggestion for further improvement

- Staff management should be more strategic, providing systematic support for professionalization, internationalisation and research activities.

## 2.2 Midwifery programme

### General information:

The Midwifery study programme has a curriculum volume of 270 ECTS with the standard period of study 4,5 years. There are 30 study places a year. From 2017 the graduates of this curriculum are awarded the profession of a level 6 midwife.

The main considerations related to this programme that determined the recommendations made in the assessment report of the 2016 EKKA evaluation were:

- The curriculum meets the requirements of the EU directives.
- The curriculum provides an option for part-time and individual study programmes.

The recommendations of the previous accreditation panel that were not or only partially implemented affected the points:

- The development of a collaborative MSc in Midwifery in cooperation with Tartu University.
- The publication of applied research projects in international peer reviewed journals.

### Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s) in higher education.
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

### Evidence and Analysis

The panel read an overview describing the following inputs to midwifery curriculum development:

1. Developmental trends in the organization and the administration of the wider healthcare system as well as other social and political changes.
2. Guidance and requirements of the European Midwives Association and other professional standards.
3. EU directives

4. Recommendations of the previous EKKA assessment panel (2012).
5. Students, alumni and employer feedback.

The panel heard from students, alumni and employers that the study programme takes into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders. The panel also formed the view that the management and development of studies meets legislative and labour market requirements.

In relation to research and internationalisation, the panel found that several international teachers have been engaged and that members of teaching staff are involved in various international projects (e.g. Ebreast) and staff also contribute to the dissemination of research results at international and national levels. However, the panel formed the view that this positive research activity needs to be developed further.

Staff bring the understanding of cultural diversity that is gained through international experience and collaboration, using it to enrich the curriculum. Curriculum development is also informed by research studies. For example, the panel noted that in the period 2016-2018, three research studies and a number of final theses were relevant to curriculum development and used for this purpose.

The panel observed that the curriculum is outcome based and well constructed. Learning outcomes are clear and sufficiently detailed, making use of Blooms taxonomy to ensure that they are articulated according to level.

Assessments are described in most syllabi. However, from the discussions with students it became evident that assessment criteria used in marking assessments are typically not provided to students. There is an exception to this in the area of final theses and the practice settings for which the criteria for judging are well defined.

Horizontal and vertical cohesion of the programme is analysed in cooperation with the Council of the European Midwives Association. Teaching content and methods enable students to achieve the learning outcomes and the division of subjects across modules is purposeful and coherent.

The panel heard that exams are designed to test and develop core competences, including knowledge, skills and behaviours (for example performance in the practical training is evaluated, along with case-based tasks). Students are trained for and through participation in various activities that serve society, and this supports them effectively in developing creative and entrepreneurial skills as well as other general competences.

The panel read, heard and observed that the learning environment, including materials, tools, simulation training equipment and technology are of a high standard.

#### **Suggestion for further improvement**

- The panel suggests that in addition to ensuring that the curriculum continues to meet the needs of the labour market, the College should also ensure that it is increasingly and deeply engaged with ongoing academic understanding and debate about midwifery. Having strengthened this element, the nexus between research and teaching can also be made stronger and this should be considered. These changes will help to optimise the professional development of midwives.

## Learning, teaching and assessment

- Students' choice of specialisation is supported. Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

### Evidence and Analysis

The panel was provided with a description of the support that students receive when deciding on a specialisation to pursue. At the beginning of their studies, students are encouraged to be self-directed, assuming responsibility for the planning of their own studies. Students are able to decide which practical skills they wish to develop more and they receive individual feedback on their performance. The curriculum includes 9 ECTS of electives to provide student choice.

Midwifery training at THCC is highly successful and the panel heard that the connections made between theory and practice in the curriculum are perceived as helpful by students. The department and its staff have extensive experience in midwifery education while also remaining open to new developments and influences.

The panel heard that teachers already cooperate to some extent in curriculum development and innovation. However, the panel formed the judgment that a higher level of cooperation especially in developing further professionalisation in controlling quality of assessment methods.

The process for recognition of prior learning is well established and more and more students are making use of it. However, the criteria that govern this are not transparent and must be clearly articulated and communicated.

Students testified to an open learning environment and a helpful staff in solving problems. The support services are close to the students, but the structure is not explicit visible.

The quality level of the bachelor theses shows a high bandwidth. The implementation of research projects and the cooperation of students should be expanded.

### Commendation

- The panel commends the College for its use of simulation-based training for the development of competences.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- The panel recommends that there be a more stringent alignment between learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessments, with clearly defined criteria for judgment that are transparent for students.
- The panel recommends that the College ensure that all teachers can develop descriptive criterion referencing assessment matrixes for the various assessment tasks. Quality of assessment should be more controlled as was already mentioned by the previous accreditation team in 2012.

### Suggestion for further improvement

- General competences are not systematically developed in the curriculum. We recommend to work more inter-professionally, so that this process would continue speedily.

### Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The development of the teaching staff depends on the needs of the study programmes and students as well as on the feedback from all parties and self-evaluation. The effectiveness of studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

### Evidence and Analysis

The Department of Nursing and Midwifery includes 35.5 teaching positions, 30.5 of which are governed by employment contracts and 5 by authorization agreements.

Although there are unfilled positions, teaching staff did not complain about excessive workload. The proportion of employees who work part-time in the College and part-time in the occupational field is high. The panel heard from management, stakeholders, students, and teachers that these staff benefit the College by ensuring that students benefit from professional experience, especially in the development of practical skills. However, this high proportion also creates difficulties in College management (one obvious example is the creation of a robust timetable, but this is not the only issue) and the steering of R&D activities. The panel concluded that College management should establish the minimum proportion of teachers that it will employ full-time in order to maintain cohesion between different subjects and to ensure that the College's mission is understood and taken forward effectively. In addition, the College should give special attention to communication processes between employees and students.

Members of teaching staff know the core values of the College and are aware of proper professional and academic ethics, although the code of ethics is not very well known as such. Nevertheless, the panel was convinced by what it heard from staff that their ethical standards are high.

The College provides good opportunities for participation in international mobility programs, but the way that mobility contributes to the curriculum is not always easy to see. Several international partners collaborate with staff teaching this curriculum. However, international teachers coming in to teach are scarce and only 6 ECTS is taught in English. Some of the restrictions (maximum of ECTS taught in English) in this area are the result of Estonian legislation, requiring progress on a political level.

#### Area of concern and recommendations

- The panel judged that a greater proportion of staff should be full-time in order to maintain and develop the excellence of the programme.

#### Suggestions for further improvement

- The College should engage in regular staff development to ensure that pedagogical development and innovation are embedded systematically.
- The College should increase awareness and knowledge of the code of ethics of students.
- The College should provide more teaching in English taking into account the developments in the area of internationalization of universities in general, but also in view of the increasing internationalization in the area of midwives.

## 2.3 Biomedical Laboratory Science programme

### Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s) in higher education.
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

### Evidence and Analysis

Curriculum development starts with an analysis of the needs of the Estonian workforce as expressed by local employers. All curricula at THCC are designed and developed through intensive collaboration

with representatives of the labour market. Due attention is also given to relevant legislation; international organizations; recommendations arising from external evaluations; changes in the organization of studies; and the College's approach to lifelong learning. A directive of the rector regulates the development, evaluation and quality assurance of programmes by curriculum boards. The panel read that the Board of Biomedical Laboratory Sciences (**BMLS**) includes teachers, employers, and students, among others.

Students, teaching staff, supervisors of practical training, employers and representatives of the professional association participate in the design, development and ongoing change of the curriculum. This work proceeds from the results of internal evaluations provided by students, teachers, graduates and stakeholders, as well as from the development of professional organisational standards and the evolution of the scientific discipline internationally.

The panel read and heard that surveys are undertaken on an annual basis with students and graduates and biennially with employers. Survey results inform subsequent curriculum changes. The panel read several examples of curriculum developments driven by learner feedback and the results of research. Based on a review and revision process of the professional standard or BMLS (2018) that involved teachers, the curriculum needs to be reviewed to ensure that it remains coherent, and a substantial curriculum revision is planned for the academic year 2019/2020. The panel recommends that this would ensure that the curriculum is thoroughly outcome-based and that there is full alignment between carefully defined learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, and assessment methods and tasks.

The curriculum development process also includes consideration of equivalent programmes at other institutions. According to the recommendations of the European Association for Professions in Biomedical Laboratory Science, undergraduate education in this area should last for four years. Although in Estonia the programme duration is 3,5 years and 210 ECTS. the knowledge and skills of Estonian graduates are comparable with those of other European countries and students can perform practical training in different institutions in Europe according to the teachers.

The need for qualified biomedical laboratory scientists is increasing in Estonia due to increasing rates of retirement of laboratory staff members. For this reason THCC's external communication plan is particularly helpful, disseminating information about BMLS and the THCC programme in wider society and in gymnasia in particular.

Pedagogical research is taking place and four research studies are being carried out in 2019 on the curriculum. Students are involved in these studies and the results are used to inform the development of subject content and the preparation of elective subjects.

The panel read that the College has developed guides to stimulate independent study by students.

The College shows good practice by supervising student theses in areas in which staff are conducting research. The panel read several examples of such research activities, which also noted the success of students in presenting their work at conferences and sometimes doing prize-winning work.

Teaching staff participate in national and international research projects. The panel were not provided with a large number of examples of this, but did not the wide range of international publications that have arisen from finals theses.

The general learning outcomes of the curriculum and the modules that make it up are clearly defined and in accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education standard level 6. In addition to subject content, the curriculum includes several courses that develop transferable knowledge, skills

and attitudes (e.g. communication psychology, social psychology, conflict psychology, philosophy and ethics, academic reading and writing, basis of research, management and entrepreneurship). The College is planning interprofessional learning with nursing and midwifery students on the topic of blood testing.

The curriculum includes 10ECTS points of elective subjects and 2ECTS for English speaking students to provide information about Estonia.

The panel formed the view that the quality of resources is high. However, the College should ensure that there are sufficient copies of core textbooks for each programme held in the library.

Although there are sufficient resources to support the programme at present, the method of resource allocation is not strategic but *ad hoc*. The panel heard that each year the heads of departments are asked to make a list of what is needed and College management then decide what to do about those lists. The panel recommends that a resource allocation plan is produced to ensure that resourcing of programmes is strategic, systematic and sustainable over the next five years. The College may wish to support the five-year plan with more fine-grained annual plans.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- A substantial curriculum revision will be made during 2019/2020 and so the panel recommends that this would ensure that the curriculum is thoroughly outcome-based and that there is full alignment between carefully defined learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, and assessment methods and tasks.
- The College should consider systematically the relationship between research and teaching and the connection should be more clearly evident within the curriculum. It is good that curriculum development takes into account the needs of the labour market, but more attention should be paid to the evolution of, and innovations within, the scientific field of biomedical laboratory sciences.

### Suggestions for further improvement

- As for financial resources, the panel recommends to make a clear, purposeful, systematic and sustainable allocation plan for 5 years, with yearly plans for follow-up.
- Each program should make a list of the core textbooks and for these books enough exemplars should be available in the library.
- The panel recommends to install in collaboration with the other programmes a module of interprofessional learning and working. Because the graduates will work in an interprofessional context later on it is more and more necessary to prepare them for this during education.

## Learning, teaching and assessment

- Students' choice of specialisation is supported. Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

### Evidence and Analysis

Student admission is based on an admission test and interview. The procedure is transparent and fair. Students can prepare themselves during their last year of gymnasium and they have the opportunity to take part in a student shadowing scheme to enable them to choose the specialisation that best fits them.

Some elective subjects are made available to help students during the first year to even up their prior education (e.g. Basis of Chemistry, Biochemistry, Russian Language, Estonian Language, Self Direction). An individual approach is taken to students, some of who are provided with support such as individual study plans or psychological counselling as necessary. Students with special needs have the opportunity to take exams at times that suit them better, working with independent learning assignments, elective courses and subjects, and taking e-courses in English.

The panel found that levels of student satisfaction with the programme are high. Students are very enthusiastic and confirm that the learning environment is student centred. However, the panel heard from some students that there are not enough spaces to work in smaller groups.

The panel were able to read the syllabi that detail learning outcomes, assessment methods and criteria for various courses. The panel formed the view that in working on the revision of the curriculum, teaching staff should start a process of reviewing and implementing learning outcomes on the basis of both professional and scientific standards and apply this process to the whole curriculum, as well as to each module, subject and course. The alignment between learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods and assessment methods should be reconsidered and made more explicit for students to ensure that all of the defined learning outcomes at programme level are fully achieved by each student.

More attention should be paid to assessment criteria, which are mostly not made explicit and not known by the students. More transparency in this domain is needed. This is a request that was also made by the previous accreditation panel in 2012, and so it should be resolved quickly, effectively and

transparently. The College demonstrates good practice in some assessments by involving a team of teachers in their development.

Teaching and learning activities are diverse and e-learning is integrated into the courses. Supervision and feedback of independent work is regulated by guidelines for students in the Student Information System. Feedback is given in different ways, either before the presentation of the task or after. The guidelines for final theses are well written and an element of good practice.

Practical training consists of 46 ECTS and is mostly well organised. Teachers at the training placement are well prepared for their task. Some have followed an in-service training programme to enable them to coach the students better, making use of observation and feedback. This training programme should be obligatory for all placement teachers.

Each practical training session is supervised by a teacher who collaborates closely with the practice institution. The panel heard that teachers visit placement institutions before training begins. If a student complains about the placement, the teacher will also visit to solve the problem. The practice book on Moodle makes it possible for supervisor and teacher to follow the student's achievements together. Students can go abroad for practical training.

The learning environment is student-centred and the skills lab is well equipped. The panel read that sustainable planning of long term investments ensures the quality of studies over time. However, the panel saw no further evidence to support this. Nevertheless, the panel was persuaded by what it saw that the quality of the skills lab is high. Students are properly informed of safety guidelines on multiple occasions and these guidelines are also provided on paper. Students have to learn the safety guidelines, must take an instructional class and sign a safety document.

The individual development and progress of each student is followed by a Study Advisor and the student information system provides information to guide follow-up of students. However, this is a reactive approach that only addressed problems once they arise and students come in to the Department for Academic Affairs. A more proactive and preventative system is required. The results of the recent evaluation of the Department of Academic Affairs are not known for the moment. The panel found no evidence that the installation of this new structure has remedied the problems with the organization of study.

The panel read that the programme produces high quality graduates and it was convinced by this by all it heard from students, graduates and employers. The employment rate is high.

### Areas of concern and recommendations

- The quality of assessment across the programme should be more carefully controlled. The panel recommends that the College ensures that all teachers can develop descriptive criterion-referenced assessment matrices for assessment tasks. This was also a recommendation of the previous accreditation team in 2012 and the panel found that it still needs to be addressed.
- Implementation of RPL should be developed to provide explicit criteria for judgement in order that decisions are more transparent.

## Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The development of the teaching staff depends on the needs of the study programmes and students as well as on the feedback from all parties and self-evaluation. The effectiveness of studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

### Evidence and Analysis

5.75FTE staff support the BMLS programme and this workload is spread across seven persons: 1.75FTE docent (2 persons), 0.5FTE lecturer (1 person), 3.5FTE assistant (4 persons). One docent has a PhD, three staff have a master's degree and 3 staff have an equivalent qualification to that. The student/staff ratio in the Autumn semester was 11 students per teaching position and in the Spring semester it was 9. The panel heard during interviews that teaching staff work well as a team. The panel met with very enthusiastic, highly motivated teachers. The College's monthly briefings are seen as an effective and informative tool that supports the integration of the team.

Staff are well aware of academic ethics. However, the levels of mobility among teaching staff are low. This is a pity since international research output is good. Furthermore, only one docent represents the curriculum in the European association of BMLS. Internationalisation is thus at a low level in this area.

Evaluation of teachers is based on student satisfaction surveys and annual developmental interviews in which the goals for teaching, research, community services and internationalization are determined and evaluated.

The panel judged that the number of teaching staff is too small to cover 210 ECTS, although student numbers are small and teachers are not complaining of excessive workload. Teaching staff cooperate well and are active in the development of teaching activities as well as research studies.

### Suggestions for further improvement

- The College should monitor the need for teaching staff in this programme.
- Levels of international activity among staff should be raised.
- The extent of research activity should be increased in line with a research strategy that should be produced.
- Staff management should be more strategic and more support should be given to teaching staff to help with professionalization, internationalisation and research activities.

### 3. Assessment findings of the study programmes in vocational education and training (VET)

Study programme group	Study programme	Types of VET (Level of EQF) Forms of study (Full-time study school-based or workplace-based form of study; non-stationary study)	Academic unit responsible for the study programme
<b>Social work and counselling</b>	Care Worker	EQF level 4 Full-time study school-based	Vocational Education Department
	Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems	EQF Level 4 Full-time study school-based and workplace-based form of study	
<b>Child care and youth services</b>	Child Minder	EQF Level 4 Full-time study school-based and workplace-based form of study	Vocational Education Department
<b>Therapy and rehabilitation</b>	Masseur/Masseuse	EQF Level 5 Full-time study school-based	Vocational Education Department
<b>Medical diagnostic and treatment technology</b>	Emergency Medical Technician	EQF level 4 Full-time study school-based	Vocational Education Department

#### General information:

THCC provides initial vocational training in four study programme groups: social work and counselling; child care and youth services; medical diagnostic and treatment technology; and therapy and rehabilitation. The College has the right to award the profession on all vocational training curricula. All curricula have been recently revised on the basis of revisions of professional standards and stakeholder feedback. After passing expert evaluation they have been approved in the EHIS: Care Worker in 04.02.2019; Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems in 28.01.2019; Child Minder in 28.01.2019; Emergency Medical Technician in 26.04.2019 and Masseur/masseuse in 28.01.2019. The following table presents the numbers of students in VET education, annual admittance, discontinuation, graduation and passing professional examination. It can be observed that from the year 2017 all graduated students on the curricula have also passed the professional examination, which shows a high level of VET education in THCC.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION		ACADEMIC YEAR				
		14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19 *
<b>Care worker</b>	Pupils	49	51	40	49	34
	Admitted	22	21	13	21	16
	Discontinued	5	8	12	13	8
	Graduated	14	27	11	16	9
	incl. Graduated who passed professional examination	0	0	0	16	9
<b>Client worker for people with mental health problems</b>	Pupils	-	-	-	-	10
	Admitted	-	-	-	-	11
	Discontinued	-	-	-	-	1
	Graduated	-	-	-	-	0
	incl. Graduated who passed professional examination	-	-	-	-	0
<b>Client worker for people with mental health problems (work- based study)</b>	Pupils	-	-	21	20	14
	Admitted	-	-	21	20	16
	Discontinued	-	-	2	4	2
	Graduated	-	-	19	16	0
	incl. Graduated who passed professional examination	-	-	19	16	0
<b>Emergency Medical Technician</b>	Pupils	25	24	23	25	22
	Admitted	24	23	22	23	24
	Discontinued	2	6	5	7	3
	Graduated	22	17	17	20	0
	incl. Graduated who passed professional examination	0	0	0	20	0
<b>Childminder</b>	Pupils	-	20	19	21	21
	Admitted	-	20	18	20	22
	Discontinued	-	1	2	6	2
	Graduated	-	18	15	16	0
	incl. Graduated who passed professional examination	-	0	15	16	0
<b>Childminder</b>	Pupils	-	-	27	24	22

<b>(work- based study)</b>	Admitted	-	-	27	24	22
	Discontinued	-	-	4	3	0
	Graduated	-	-	24	22	0
	incl. Graduated who passed professional examination	-	-	24	22	0
Examination						
<b>Masseur/Masseuse</b>	Pupils	-	-	13	11	6
	Admitted	-	-	13	7	-
	Discontinued	-	-	2	1	0
	Graduated	-	-	-	11	0
	incl. Graduated who passed professional examination	-	-	-	11	0
<b>In total</b>	<b>Pupils</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>129</b>
	<b>Admitted</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>111</b>
	<b>Discontinued</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>Graduated</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>incl. Graduated who passed professional examination</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>9</b>

### 3.1 Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

#### Evidence and Analysis

The head of Vocational Education Department leads the team of teachers. The group of full time teachers in VET programmes is compact, 5.0 positions filled by eight persons. For each of the five

programmes a lead teacher has been nominated. This team ensures the coherence of the development of VET study programmes. The total number of VET students in the College has varied between 74 and 150 over the last 5 years, being now 129.

The development of study programmes was observed to be constant and collaborative. Study programme development starts with the analysis of the needs of the Estonian workforce as expressed by local employers. The panel read that the College estimates the size of the group based on the employability forecast and their own resources. Study programmes are designed on the basis of current professional standards and the Vocational Education Standard in cooperation with employers. The Self-Evaluation Report described and provided evidence on wide curriculum development work based on feedback from and collaboration with the employers in all programmes except Masseur/Masseuse. The panel heard several examples of how current trends reflected in employers' feedback have led to the addition of new topics and electives to the programmes. Student feedback is also taken into account. Changes to the programmes are agreed and documented by the Curriculum Board.

The College has renewed Care Worker, Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems, Child Minder, Emergency Medical Technician programmes, and also the Masseur/Masseuse curriculum which was launched in 2017. In addition to this THCC plans to launch two new programmes. For example, programme in Podiatry, in which area the College has taught electives and in which it has already made financial investment.

Several programmes provide opportunities for international experience. Students of Care Worker, Child Minder and Emergency Medical Technician programmes participate in student mobility and development projects. The College has sought to integrate its RDC and international mobility activities with the content, methods, learning materials and practice requirements of its programmes. For example, the international WellTech project that aimed to develop solutions to facilitate independent coping by the elderly in their home environment has in various ways been integrated into the curriculum and thus supported Care Worker study programme development.

The College has described the purpose of its VET study programmes and the associated learning outcomes at the programme level based on professional standards and other factors as mentioned above. In addition, learning outcomes have been defined at the study module level. The learning outcomes are set at EQF levels 4 or 5 as appropriate to the study programmes. The learning outcomes are written in a concrete rather than an abstract way. The panel discovered that the documentation of the programme is wide and detailed containing several official obligatory documents (curricula, module implementation plans) as well as documents that are College's own requirements (subject syllabus). Some of them were in Moodle, some in intranet for teachers. Analysis of these documents and removal of overlapping documentation might lower the administrative burden of leading lecturers and the head of department.

A lead teacher ensures the successful implementation of the programme, taking a set of topics and distributing them to the appropriate teachers and expert practitioners. From the provided documentation it can be observed that the teachers are teaching the same topics in several programmes based on their expert areas. The teaching content and the teaching methods in VET programmes enable students to achieve the key competences required in their professions. Training in general competencies, for example digital technologies and internationalization, are present in all curricula, though not to the same extent. For example, the panel read that entrepreneurship is developed more intensively in those programmes where it is also most needed, for example in the Masseur/Masseuse study programme. A wide variety of teaching and learning methods are used in

VET programmes. For example, simulations are used in Emergency Medical Technician programme but also all other VET programmes.

The assessment methods described in module implementation plans are generally suitable for assessing the achievement of learning outcomes, but the assessment criteria are too general for the transparent assessment of competences. The assessment criteria should contain explicit descriptions of the level that must be met in order to pass the courses and modules. Since detailed assessment criteria for tasks are described in subject plans, the panel could not evaluate the system as a whole. More detailed assessment criteria could better support students to achieve the learning outcomes. For example, while Emergency Medical Technician alumni could clearly explain to the panel the parts of the occupational qualification exam, they could not explain how resuscitation is assessed beyond saying that the resuscitation simulation tool should show 95%. In subject syllabus called First Aid the simulation based exercise assessment criterion says “solving the simulation task without harming patient or him/herself”. The panel are clear that principles of descriptive criteria-based assessment should be applied to all assessments for a number of reasons. When these principles are applied, students are able to evaluate their own work and the assessment can be more objective. Therefore, the panel concludes that there is lack of coherence between learning outcomes and assessment criteria in the study programmes, their implementation plans and subject syllabi. On a positive note, employers are taking part in occupational qualification assessments at the end of the studies ensuring that they are satisfied with the level of students skills.

THCC has invested in the learning environment. It offers students different types of learning opportunities from advanced simulation to group and individual study spaces. Technological innovations, digital equipment, electronic tools, scientific journals, databases and books are available and create a modern learning community that supports students to achieve their learning outcomes. The skills labs are available for students to practice based on their own needs and motivation.

### Commendation

- Planning, constant development and management of VET studies shows high commitment of the staff and that the expectations of the labour market and requirements set for programmes are well taken into account as all graduates are able to pass the professional examination.

### Area of concern and recommendations

- Modules are divided into subjects and in subject syllabi different learning outcomes are phrased in such a way that it is difficult to see the alignment between learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The criteria in module implementation plans or in subject syllabi do not explicitly describe the required level of performance. The College should review and refresh its assessment criteria and make sure that module-based assessment including key-competences is carried out instead of subject-based assessment. Explicit performance assessment criteria in module implementation plans will ensure that students, teachers and employers know how students’ skills are assessed.

### Suggestion for further improvement

- It is recommended to assess the total of documents and their content in order to identify the needed key documentation for modern competence-based modular programme.

## 3.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Students' choice of specialisation is supported. Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

### Evidence and Analysis

The panel read that admission of students takes place twice each year. The admission conditions are available on the homepage and the SAIS system is used during the admission process. However, 10% of students who have dropped out of vocational education cite the unsuitability of their speciality as the reason. The panel formed the view that the College could better support students in deciding which specialisation to pursue. Vocational education students could participate in the student council, however at this moment there is no VET student representative in the council and the panel heard that one student from Care Worker programme is planning to do so in future. Panel suggests the College to consider ways how to motivate adult learners of VET programmes to take more active role in student body.

A student-centred approach is implemented in the organisation of studies. Teachers, students and graduates all emphasized the individual approach given to students' issues and the availability of Individual study plans for students who are unable to make normal academic progress for any reason. Panel reads that all study programmes have e-learning support for practical modules and e-learning is seen as a way to support learners to manage their time more efficiently and choose a suitable place for learning. The panel heard from teachers that they use SIS (Study Information System) to provide students with electronical materials as well HITSA Moodle platform. In all VET programmes students can choose the elective study module that is focusing to develop students' skills to use safely internet and computer programmes for their studies (SIS, Moodle, THCC internal web) and later during their professional career. However, from observation of some of the courses on HITSA Moodle platform it could be seen that the full potential to engage students in e-learning with active tasks has not yet been reached. More training of teachers on how to use the e-learning platform could be beneficial to engage students in e-learning much more.

The panel heard that graduates of THCC have better key competencies than other employees in the area. As a good example out of this is that some of the graduates of the Care Worker programme continue their studies on higher education nursing programme. Student career development is

supported in all VET programmes through the “Planning career and entrepreneurial” module. This facilitates a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial competence among students.

The system to evaluate prior learning and professional experiences (RPL) is in place. The panel read that the percentage of students for whom professional experience is recognised as part of the curriculum or as practical training on the vocational education programmes is 45%. The panel also read that about 60% of RPL admissions recognise prior learning and about 30% recognise work experiences. The proportion of applicants for RPL who have been rejected has decreased in the period 2016-2018. Students were aware that RPL is a possibility and said that they have been properly informed about it via email and in study information sessions.

The panel read that at THCC there are five school-based study programmes (Care Worker, Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems, Child Minder, Emergency Medical Technician and Masseur/Masseuse) and two work-placed programmes (Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems and Child Minder). The panel heard that employers appreciate very much the work-place based programmes, because they offer a great study possibility for the employees they have already hired. The panel also found that there is good co-operation between THCC and practical training places.

There are opportunities for mobility within Estonia and internationally and, for example, Care Worker students plan to take part in a study trip to Finland and Germany. The aim of the trip is to familiarize themselves with same work in other countries in the EU. The panel was pleased to hear that authentic learning situations are offered to Emergency Medical Technician programme, while students take part in inter-professional exercises in The Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (Sisekaitseakadeemia). Also, every other year the students have had possibility to participate in international Modex exercise.

Support services for students are in place, as there is a dedicated study specialist for all VET programmes and leading teachers for each programme in addition to the head of the VET department. Students are satisfied with the support that is made available to them. Leading teachers together with study specialists monitor the individual development and progress of each student. Information about support (e.g. information minutes, psychologist, mobility, RPL) is sent via personal e-mail to the students. Part-time teachers in THCC are often employers and through them students are supported to find jobs in the relevant field after graduation.

Graduates of the VET study programmes are nationally competitive in terms of their knowledge and skills. Care Worker, Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems, Child Minder and Masseur/Masseuse employers were fully satisfied with school activities and special praise was given to work-placed programmes. International competitiveness is difficult to assess as no examples of alumni working abroad or employers from other countries were available to the panel. As an interpreter was needed for all VET interviews it might be assumed that the language skills for VET graduates can be an obstacle for graduates to work internationally.

### Commendations

- THCC offers two work-place based study programmes (Child Minder and Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems) that are highly appreciated by employers.
- Simulation exercises are used and high-quality simulation tools are put into practice in all programmes. Students can use these tools also for personal training of skills outside of classes time.

- Inter-professional exercises in Emergency Medical Technician programme are carried out together with The Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (Sisekaitseakadeemia) and every other year the students have taken part in international Modex exercise. It improves the possibilities of inter-professional and authentic training for students.

#### Suggestions for further improvement

- To decrease the dropout rate in Care Worker curriculum, THCC could offer more support to students for deciding which specialisation to pursue and by contributing to the value of the care worker profession in collaboration with the employers.
- Students on VET programmes could be encouraged to take active role in THCC student body and to become active members of the student council.
- THCC should promote the e-learning support in VET education through training of teachers in HITSA Moodle environment possibilities. Currently it is seen as a tool that makes exchange of information and giving feedback on the activities of practical training more flexible and efficient. However, e-learning materials, tasks for students, self-evaluation test etc. can support learning in all modules. For promotion of good e-learning courses quality-stamps from HITSA could be applied.

### 3.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The development of the teaching staff depends on the needs of the study programmes and students as well as on the feedback from all parties and self-evaluation. The effectiveness of studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

The teaching staff in all VET programmes are motivated and have good practical skills. Qualification requirements for members of the teaching staff who work full-time or part-time at Tartu Health Care College are imposed by the College Council. Open competitions for teaching staff positions take place every spring. Personnel recruitment is mostly initiated by the relevant head of department and only since August 2019 has it been managed more systematically and centrally. However, some positions were still left unfilled and it might lead to too heavy working load of leading teachers. The panel reads that THCC plans recruitment of experts and international teachers for the development and implementation of new study programmes.

The planning of teacher's full working time including different tasks (leadership, teaching, RD, services to society) is flexible, relies largely on their individual needs and abilities and is managed by a mapping process. For work-place based training programmes the teachers sometimes need to travel outside Tartu. Teaching staff have the opportunity for a teaching-free semester but this opportunity is rarely taken up even though staff are aware of it.

There are some signs of a serious imbalance between the fulltime (42%) and part-time (58%) workloads of teaching staff. Preferring part-time teachers with everyday practical experience causes an excessive workload for full-time teachers and especially for leading teachers. According to students, it also causes problems with a stable timetable. It also impacts quality management and communication processes and – as teaching staff pointed out – the ability to develop programmes. Mentoring is available for novice teachers. However, this is voluntary and not used systematically. Novice teacher's pedagogical skills are supervised by lead teachers. As some lead teachers were quite new in that position, systematic development of pedagogical skills among teaching staff (both full- and part-time) should be carried out. One area where pedagogical skills need to be updated is competence-based assessment (see chapter 3.1).

The College has developed policy documents, training and monitoring tools to cultivate the principles of academic ethics across the entire institution. Aspects of professional ethics in College and in practice places are very clearly expressed by students and teachers. Aspects of academic ethics such as plagiarism, copying from the web, using citation etc. are mentioned in interviews, but the whole code of academic ethics is not systematically recognised by students.

The College implements lifelong learning in the development of its teaching staff. In recent years the number of work-related travels abroad by the teaching staff has increased in relation to active international activity and due to the support of the different mobility programmes. Teacher's participation in mobility programmes, projects, networks etc. is highly valued but not very extensive due to financial limitations, other duties and sometimes insufficient language skills. The supervisors at practice places are prepared by teachers in the College, which is why cooperation and communication between the College and the practice places, especially hospitals, is strong.

In recent years, student satisfaction with theoretical and practical skills of teaching staff has been consistently high (4.0-4.3 on a 5-point scale). This point is underlined by students, alumni and employers in interviews. It is evidence of a high-level preparation of students for professional practice and work.

College policy supports the participation of teachers in professional developmental activities such as the MA and PhD studies, international mobility and RDC activities. The training needs of teachers are identified in the annual development interview based on their duties and expressed needs. Teaching staff noted that the development areas preferred by teachers are mostly professional. The College has carried out joint training for the development of pedagogical skills. For example, "Digital mornings for teaching staff to develop educational technology competences" took place regularly through 2016-2017. Lately, some teachers have participated in simulation-based training. Unfortunately, pedagogical development is not systematically embedded across all programmes. There is a challenge to extend opportunities for inter-professional and international learning experiences and to implement them in teaching. Good examples were found in the Emergency Medical Technician programme, see chapter 3.2.

Annual evaluation of academic staff is carried out systematically and effectively. The evaluation considers work done in teaching and supervision, research and society services and internationalisation.

### Commendation

- The teaching staff in Tartu Health Care College VET programmes are highly motivated and have high level practical skills. They use student-centred approach to teaching and take into account individual needs of students.

### Area of concern and recommendations

- Pedagogical development is not systematic for the teaching staff of all programmes. The panel recommends that the development of pedagogical skills among teaching staff be comprehensive and systematic.

### Suggestions for further improvement

- The management of workload for full-time lead teachers could be improved by reducing teaching load to enable more effective steering of overall curriculum provision and development.
- When new programmes will be launched and teaching outside of Tartu needs to be conducted, new full-time lead teachers could be hired to launch these new study programmes.
- To invest in the improvement of teacher's foreign language skills, especially improving English language skills for internationalisation in their own field, self-development and mobility.

## Appendix 1: Schedule of the visit to THCC

### Institutional Accreditation Tartu Health Care College (THCC)

**SCHEDULE OF THE VISIT**  
**14 – 18 October 2019**

#### Members of the assessment committee:

<b>Joke Denekens</b>	Emeritus Professor, College of Antwerp (Belgium)
<b>Johanna Heikkilä</b>	Senior Advisor at Jyväskylä College of Applied Sciences (Finland)
<b>Lies van Gennip</b>	CEO/Chair Nictiz, national center for eHealth and standards (The Netherlands)
<b>Jonathan Loose</b>	Research Associate, School of Advanced Studies, College of London; Institutional Reviewer, UK Quality Assurance Agency; and Research Director, Stewards Company, Ltd. (United Kingdom)
<b>Barbara Schildberger</b>	Head of Degree Programme in Midwifery; Diversity Manager, College of Applied Sciences for Health Professions in Upper Austria (Austria)
<b>Stella Polikarpus</b>	Lecturer in Crises Management Chair, Rescue College, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (Estonia)
<b>Julia Lezik</b>	Tartu branch Office manager and ambulance nurse in Tartu Ambulance Service (Estonia)
<b>Andra Õismaa</b>	Medicum Tervishoiuteenus Ltd., Nurse Manager, Training Manager (Estonia)
<b>Rait Bessonov</b>	Student (Faculty of Medicine), College of Tartu. Assistant Physician, Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinic of Tartu College Hospital, Nursing Department (Estonia)

#### Coordinators:

##### **Ms Tiia Bach**

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##### **Ms Reet Taimsoo**

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+372 503 9701

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13****Arrival in Tallinn**

Please take a taxi from the airport to the hotel (about 10 EUR), ask for a receipt.

**Accommodation: Hotel L'Ermitage** <http://www.lermitagehotel.ee/en/> (address: Toompuiestee 19)

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 14**

Venue: EKKA Office (*Toompuiestee 30*)

**Introductory and panel meeting in EKKA office**

9.30 – 12.00 Orientation seminar

- a) Estonian (higher) education system
- b) Quality assurance in higher education and research
- c) Guidelines and procedures of institutional accreditation
  - a. Assessment components
  - b. Interviewing techniques
  - c. Writing assessment report
  - d. Decision-making
  - e. Deadlines

12.00 – 13.00 *Lunch*

13.00 – 17.00 Preparation for the visit: strategy for interviews, final formulation and division of questions, etc.

17.30 Bus to Tartu, accommodation at [Hotel Tartu](#)

<b>TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15</b>			
Venue: Tartu Health Care College (Nooruse 5, Tartu)			
Time	Activity	Experts Room number	Representatives of the College
9.00	<i>Please meet in the hotel lobby, taxi to the College</i>	All	
9.30 – 10.45	Meeting with the <b>management of the College (Rector, Vice-Rector, Administrative and Finance Director)</b> <i>Topics: Current position of the College in Estonia, general and financial management, resources, plans for the future development</i>	All  Room 118	1. <b>Ms Ulla Preeden</b> , Rector; 2. <b>Ms Kersti Viitkar</b> , Vice Rector for Academic Affairs; 3. <b>Mr Ermo Kruuse</b> , Administrative and Finance Director.  Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik
10.45 – 11.00	<i>Break</i>	Room 117	
11.00 – 12.00	Introductory meeting with <b>self-evaluation team</b> <i>Topics: Introduction of panel members and representatives of the College. Discussion about the preparation of the SER. Any additional requests from the College the panel may have regarding documents, schedule, etc.</i>	All  Room 118	1. <b>Ms Gerit Dreyersdorff</b> , Academic Advisor; 2. <b>Ms Tiina Uusma</b> , Head of Vocational Education Department; 3. <b>Ms Margit Lenk-Adusoo</b> , Lecturer, Nursing and Midwifery Department; Member of the College Council; 4. <b>Ms Ene Rikaste</b> , Legal Counsel-Administrative Assistant.  Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik
12.00 – 12.15	<i>Break</i>	Room 117	
12.15 – 13.15	Meeting <b>with people responsible for study programme development and study process (covers the whole College, incl MSc programme)</b> <i>Topics: Management of studies, teaching and learning processes, study programme development, quality and personnel management, development of teaching staff.</i>	All  Room 118	1. <b>Ms Reet Urban</b> , Docent, Nursing and Midwifery Department; 2. <b>Ms Tiina Kukkes</b> , Lecturer, Radiography and Biomedical Laboratory Science Department; 3. <b>Ms Inge Paju</b> , Lecturer, Nursing and Midwifery Department; 4. <b>Ms Mary Gobbi</b> , Professor, Master's programme in Health Science, Nursing and Midwifery Department.  Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik

13.00 – 13.45	<b>Lunch, panel reflection</b>	All Room 117	
13.45 – 14.30	<b>Meeting with representatives of Academic Department (3-4 members)</b> <i>Topics: Average duration of the study (inflow, through flow, outflow, efficiency over the last 5 years), drop outs, withdrawal rates. Organisation of study programs, time tables, locations, also for practical training. Evaluation of the new structure.</i>	All Room 118	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Ms Eve Müür</b>, Head of Department of Academic Affairs;</li> <li>2. <b>Ms Arle Puidak</b>, Head Specialist of Academic Affairs;</li> <li>3. <b>Ms Riina Rešetova</b>, Studies Specialist (Radiography Curriculum and Biomedical Laboratory Science Curriculum), Department of Academic Affairs;</li> <li>4. <b>Ms Ave Päränd</b> – Studies Specialist (Physiotherapy Curriculum and Environmental Health Specialist Curriculum), Department of Academic Affairs</li> </ol> <p><b>Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik</b></p>
14.30 – 14.45	<b>Break</b>	Room 117	
14.45 – 16.00	<b>Service to society: meeting with representatives of the Competence Centre</b> <i>Topics: continuing education, internationalisation, research, development &amp; innovation activities</i>	All Room 118	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mr Richard Jalakas</b>, Service and Cooperation Coordinator;</li> <li>2. <b>Ms Merlis Karja-Kännaste</b>, Continuing Education Specialist;</li> <li>3. <b>Ms Ülle Parm</b>, Docent, Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department; Chair of the Research and Development Board of College;</li> <li>4. <b>Ms Marit Salus</b>, Lecturer, Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department; organizer of services to society through practical training on Physiotherapy Curriculum and Masseur/Masseuse Curriculum;</li> <li>5. <b>Ms Marika Külm</b>, Assistant, Radiography and Biomedical Laboratory Science Department; organizer of the health awareness workshops for gymnasiums;</li> <li>6. <b>Mr Danel Jantra</b>, International Relations Specialist.</li> <li>7. <b>Ms Jaanika Niinepuu</b>, Communications Manager.</li> </ol> <p>Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik</p>
16.00 – 17.00	<b>Tour of the College</b>	All	Tour of the College will be carried out in 2–3 groups.
17.00 - ...	<i>Panel meeting; inquiry of documents requested from the College</i>	All Room 118	

<b>WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16</b>			
Venue: Tartu Health Care College (Nooruse 5, Tartu)			
Time	Activity	Experts	Representatives of the College
9.00	<i>Please meet in the hotel lobby, taxi to the College</i>		
9.30 – 10.45	<p><b>Learning support systems</b></p> <p><i>Topics:</i> student counselling, RPL, support to international students, library resources... (meeting with representatives of study department, counsellors, library manager....)</p>	All  Room 118	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Ms Airi Kerikmäe</b>, Studies Specialist (Vocational Education Curricula), Department of Academic Affairs;</li> <li>2. <b>Ms Kadi Soo</b>, Studies Specialist (Nursing Curriculum), Department of Academic Affairs;</li> <li>3. <b>Mr Kalmer Marimaa</b>, International Relations Specialist (counselling of outgoing students within the Erasmus+ programme); Assistant, Department of Nursing and Midwifery Curriculum;</li> <li>4. <b>Ms Aire Härmask</b>, Librarian;</li> <li>5. <b>Ms Kristi Vahur</b>, Lecturer, Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department; Supervising teacher of practical training on the Environmental Health Specialist Curriculum;</li> <li>6. <b>Ms Anne Rosenberg</b>, Study Designer.</li> </ol> <p>Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik</p>
10.45 – 11.00	<i>Break</i>	Room 117	
11.00 – 12.00 Parallel interviews	Meeting with <b>employers and external stakeholders of VET curricula</b> ( <i>all 5 curricula</i> )	Andra, Johanna, Julia, Stella  Room 119	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mr Kaspar Kreegimäe</b>, Chief Specialist of Pre-School Education, Tartu City Government; Chairman of the Evaluation Board of Professional Exam on the Childminder Curriculum at the College;</li> <li>2. <b>Ms Aulika Karo</b>, Teacher at Tartu Kindergarten „Ristikhein“; supervisor in workplace-based training on the Childminder Curriculum, partner in a collaborative project;</li> <li>3. <b>Ms Triinu Rõigas</b>, Community Services Manager, Viljandi Hospital; Coordinator of the training on the Care Worker Curriculum in Viljandi Hospital;</li> <li>4. <b>Ms Ülle Kumm</b>, Head of Psychiatric Clinic in Viljandi Hospital; Coordinator of training on the Care Worker Curriculum in Viljandi Hospital; Employer of graduates of the Care Worker Curriculum and the Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems Curriculum;</li> <li>5. <b>Ms Vilve Ratnik</b>, Client Manager, NGO Independent Life; Cooperation partner on the Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems Curriculum;</li> </ol>

			<p>6. <b>Mr Ilmar Solom</b>, Ambulance Nurse, Tartu Ambulance Foundation; Lecturer, Estonian Military Academy; An employer representative for the Emergency Medical Technician Curriculum;</p> <p>7. <b>Ms Kätlin Kuznetsova</b>, Head of Wellness centre, R2 SPA OÜ, V Spa; An employer representative for the Masseur/Masseuse Curriculum.</p> <p>Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik</p>
	<p>Meeting with <b>employers of HE programmes (all 3 curricula)</b>. Also, some external stakeholders of the College, not necessarily related to these programmes</p>	<p>Joke, Lies, Jon, Rait, Barbara</p> <p>Room 118</p>	<p>1. <b>Mr Priit Eelmäe</b>, Chairman of the Executive Board of Tartu University Hospital; Chair of the College Advisory Board;</p> <p>2. <b>Ms Anneli Kannus</b>, President of the Estonian Nurses Union; Member of the College Advisory Board; Honorary Member of the College; <i>Participates in the meeting via Skype</i>;</p> <p>3. <b>Ms Heli Paluste</b>, Head of the ministry's healthcare network, Ministry of Social Affairs; Member of the College Advisory Board; <i>Participates in the meeting via Skype</i>;</p> <p>4. <b>Ms Krista Pärnapuu</b>, Inspector, Estonian Health Board, Southern Region; An employer representative for the Environmental Health Specialist Curriculum;</p> <p>5. <b>Ms Irena Bartels</b>, Midwife, East Tallinn Central Hospital; Vice President of the Estonian Midwives Association; An employer representative for the Midwifery Curriculum;</p> <p>6. <b>Ms Anu Tamm</b>, Director of United Laboratories, Tartu University Hospital; An employer representative for the Biomedical Laboratory Science Curriculum;</p> <p>7. <b>Ms Kerli Koobak</b>, Charge Radiographer in Diagnostic Service, South-Estonian Hospital.</p> <p>Interpreter Ms Ingrid Podar</p>
12.00 – 12.20	Break	Room 117	
12.20 - 13.30 Parallel interviews	Meeting with <b>students of VET curricula</b>	<p>Andra, Johanna, Julia, Stella</p> <p>Room 119</p>	<p>1. <b>Ms Piret Toomsalu</b>, pupil of Childminder Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> year);</p> <p>2. <b>Ms Kerri Vikat</b>, pupil of Childminder Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> year), work-place based study in Elva Kindergarten „Murumuna“;</p> <p>3. <b>Ms Sirli Reinhaus-Kivi</b>, pupil of Care Worker Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> year);</p> <p>4. <b>Ms Aire Erstu</b>, pupil of Care Worker Curriculum (2<sup>nd</sup> year);</p> <p>5. <b>Ms Laura Pertseva</b>, pupil of Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> year);</p> <p>6. <b>Mr Mikk Salk</b>, pupil of Emergency Medical Technician Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> year);</p> <p>7. <b>Ms Liisi Lõiv</b>, pupil of Masseur/Masseuse Curriculum (2<sup>nd</sup> year).</p>

			Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik
	Meeting with <b>HE students: Midwifery, Environmental Health Specialist, and Biomedical Laboratory Science programmes</b>	Joke, Barbara, Lies, Jon, Rait  Room 118	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Ms Käroli Tori</b>, student of Environmental Health Specialist Curriculum (3<sup>rd</sup> year);</li> <li>2. <b>Ms Karmen Suss</b>, student of Midwifery Curriculum (3<sup>rd</sup> year);</li> <li>3. <b>Ms Stella Marleen Mutso</b>, student of Biomedical Laboratory Science Curriculum (3<sup>rd</sup> year, Tallinn Study Group);</li> <li>4. <b>Mr Meelike Maks</b>, student of Nursing Curriculum (3<sup>rd</sup> year); participated in the Erasmus+ programme;</li> <li>5. <b>Ms Ragne Õitspuu</b>, student of Nursing Curriculum (4<sup>th</sup> year); participated in the Welfare Technology Project;</li> <li>6. <b>Mr Heleryn Viimsi</b>, student of Physiotherapy Curriculum (3<sup>rd</sup> year); member of the curriculum board;</li> <li>7. <b>Mr Erik Landõr</b>, student of Radiography Curriculum (3<sup>rd</sup> year); member of the curriculum board;</li> <li>8. <b>Ms Kadri Niin</b>, graduate (cum laude) of Midwifery Curriculum; currently studying on the Curriculum of Health Science (Master's level) (1<sup>st</sup> year).</li> </ol> <p>Interpreter Ms Ingrid Podar</p>
<b>13.30 – 14.30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Room 117</b>	
14.30 – 15.30 Parallel interviews	Meeting with alumni of <b>VET curricula</b>	Andra, Johanna, Julia, Stella  Room 119	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Ms Liis Merenäkk</b>, graduate of Childminder Curriculum (workplace-based study) (2018); currently working as a CEO, NGO Veski Lastehoiused;</li> <li>2. <b>Ms Liisi Pikki</b>, graduate of Childminder Curriculum (2019); former course leader; currently on parental leave;</li> <li>3. <b>Ms Piret Konsin</b>, graduate of Care Worker Curriculum (2016), currently studying on the Nursing Curriculum (3<sup>rd</sup> year) and working as an assistant nurse in Intensive Care at Intensive Care Department, Tartu University Hospital;</li> <li>4. <b>Ms Merliin Kookmaa</b>, graduate of Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems Curriculum (2018); currently working as a Client Worker and Coordinator in NGO South Estonian Center for Special Care Services;</li> <li>5. <b>Mr Egert Tisler</b>, graduate of Emergency Medical Technician Curriculum (2017); currently studying on the Nursing Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> year);</li> <li>6. <b>Ms Merili Ootsing</b>, graduate of Masseur/Masseuse Curriculum (2018), currently studying on the Nursing Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> year);</li> <li>7. <b>Ms Katrin Joakit</b>, graduate of Masseur/Masseuse Curriculum (2018); currently working in Ltd Hingeruum.</li> </ol> <p>Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik</p>

	Meeting with alumni of <b>HE programmes</b>	Joke, Barbara, Lies, Jon, Rait  Room 118	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mr Egert Vinogradov</b>, graduate of Biomedical Laboratory Science Curriculum (2019); former member of the curriculum board and former chairman of Student Council at the College; currently working as a biomedical laboratory scientist in Department of Clinical Chemistry and Hematology Laboratory, Tartu University Hospital;</li> <li>2. <b>Mr Erki Arusoo</b>, graduate of Radiography Curriculum (2018); currently working as a radiographer in the North Estonia Medical Centre and studying biomedical engineering and medical physics in TalTech;</li> <li>3. <b>Ms Kertu-Liisu Ert</b>, graduate of Physiotherapy Curriculum (2019); former member of the curriculum board and former member of the teaching staff selection committee; currently working as a physiotherapist in Haapsalu Rehabilitation Centre;</li> <li>4. <b>Ms Tuuli Muistna</b>, graduate of Environmental Health Specialist Curriculum (2018); former member of College Council and Student Council at the College; currently unemployed (previously worked in the product safety field in Selver (supermarket chain in Estonia));</li> <li>5. <b>Ms Siiri Serpak</b>, graduate of Nursing Curriculum (2019); currently working as a nurse in a Family Medicine Center;</li> <li>6. <b>Ms Ilona Berzinja</b>, graduate of Nursing Curriculum (2018); currently working as a nurse in the Emergency Department, Clinic of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care, Tartu University Hospital;</li> <li>7. <b>Ms Merilin Lehismets</b>, graduate of Midwifery Curriculum (2019); currently working as a midwife in Pärnu Hospital and as a nurse in the Department of Cardiology in Pärnu Hospital.</li> </ol> <p>Interpreter Ms Ingrid Podar</p>
15.30 – 15.45	Break	Room 117	
15.45 – 17.00 Parallel interviews	Meeting with <b>teaching staff of VET curricula (all 5 curricula)</b>	Andra, Johanna, Julia, Stella  Room 119	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Ms Taimi Taimalu</b>, Teacher, Vocational Education Department (load 0.25), Teacher, Nursing and Midwifery Department (load 0.25); teaching on all Vocational Education Curricula; Leader of sports events at the College;</li> <li>2. <b>Ms Ave Kõrve-Noorkõiv</b>, Assistant, Nursing and Midwifery Department (load 1.0); teaching on the Emergency Medical Technician Curriculum; Leader of development of simulation training at the College;</li> <li>3. <b>Mr Ott-Kaspar Sults</b>, Teacher, Vocational Education Department (load 0.25); graduate and novice teacher (1<sup>st</sup> year) on the Emergency Medical Technician Curriculum;</li> </ol>

			<p>4. <b>Ms Janika Pael</b>, Lecturer, Nursing and Midwifery Department (load 1.0); teaching topics related to mental health nursing on the Care Worker Curriculum and Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems Curriculum;</p> <p>5. <b>Ms Aleksander Iljin</b>, Teacher with authorisation agreement, Vocational Education Department; teaching on the Emergency Medical Technician Curriculum;</p> <p>6. <b>Ms Kristiina Virro</b>, Teacher, Vocational Education Department (load 0.5); novice (2<sup>nd</sup> year) leading teacher on the Emergency Medical Technician Curriculum.</p> <p>Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik</p>
	Meeting with <b>teaching staff of HE programmes</b>	Joke, Lies, Jon, Rait, Barbara  Room 118	<p>1. <b>Ms Anne Vahtramäe</b>, Lecturer, Nursing and Midwifery Department (load 1.0); teaching topics related to intensive care nursing, anatomy-physiology;</p> <p>2. <b>Ms Ireen Bruus</b>, Lecturer, Nursing and Midwifery Department (load 1.0); teaching topics related to surgery, pharmacology;</p> <p>3. <b>Ms Siret Kivistik</b>, Teacher, Radiography and Biomedical Laboratory Science Department (load 0.25); teaching radiography (radiotherapy);</p> <p>4. <b>Ms Triin Aasmäe</b>, Assistant, Radiography and Biomedical Laboratory Science Department (load 0.75); teaching microbiology, immunology;</p> <p>5. <b>Ms Eve-Merike Sooväli</b>, Docent, Nursing and Midwifery Department (load 1.0); teaching basics of research, geriatrics;</p> <p>6. <b>Ms Helen Udras</b>, Assistant, Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department (load 0.5); teaching microbiology on the Environmental Health Specialist Curriculum;</p> <p>7. <b>Ms Imbi Sagar</b>, Teacher, Nursing and Midwifery Department (load 0.75); teaching topics related to midwifery and maternity care;</p> <p>8. <b>Ms Eva Mengel</b>, Lecturer, Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department (load 0.25); teaching physiotherapy.</p> <p>Interpreter Ms Ingrid Podar</p>
17.00 - ....	<i>Panel meeting; inquiry of documents requested from the College</i>	Room 118	

<b>THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17</b>			
Venue: Tartu Health Care College (Nooruse 5, Tartu)			
Time	Activity	Experts	Representatives of the College
9.00	<i>Please meet in the hotel lobby, taxi to the College</i>		
9.30 – 11.00 Parallel interviews	Meeting with <b>managers and developers VET curricula</b> ( <i>all 5 curricula</i> )	Andra, Johanna, Julia, Stella  Room 119	1. <b>Ms Tiina Uusma</b> , Head of Vocational Education Department; Developer of Emergency Medical Technician Curriculum; 2. <b>Ms Liana Kurg</b> , Lead Teacher, Vocational Education Department, Childminder Curriculum; 3. <b>Ms Maire Aruots</b> , Lead Teacher, Vocational Education Department, Care Worker Curriculum; 4. <b>Ms Maiken Jaanisk</b> , Lead Teacher, Vocational Education Department, Client Worker for People with Mental Health Problems Curriculum; 5. <b>Ms Aleksandra Vähi</b> , Lead Teacher, Vocational Education Department, Masseur/Masseuse Curriculum.  Interpreter Mr Meelis Leesik
	Meeting with <b>HE study programme managers and developers</b>	Joke, Lies, Jon, Rait, Barbara  Room 118	1. <b>Ms Saima Hinno</b> , Head of Nursing and Midwifery Department; 2. <b>Ms Marge Mahla</b> , Lecturer, Nursing and Midwifery Department, Midwifery Curriculum; 3. <b>Ms Anna-Liisa Tamm</b> , Head of Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department; 4. <b>Ms Inga Ploomipuu</b> , Lecturer, Physiotherapy and Environmental Health Department, Environmental Health Specialist Curriculum; 5. <b>Ms Zinaida Läänelaid</b> , Head of Radiography and Biomedical Laboratory Science Department; 6. <b>Mr Aivar Orav</b> , Docent, Radiography and Biomedical Laboratory Science Department, Biomedical Laboratory Science Curriculum.  Interpreter Ms Ingrid Podar
11.00 – 11.15	<i>Break</i>	Room 117	
11.15 – 12.30	• <i>“open doors” – opportunity for those from HTCC who want to come to discuss</i>	Room 118	

	<p><i>various topics related to institutional accreditation with the experts (please register by sending e-mail: <a href="mailto:tii.bach@archimedes.ee">tii.bach@archimedes.ee</a> by <u>October 15</u>; time limit is 5 minutes per person)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i><b>ad hoc interviews</b> (in case the panel considers it necessary to clarify some issues and talk once again to someone)</i></li> </ul>		
12.30 – 13.30	<b>Lunch</b>	Room 117	
13.30 – 14.30	Panel meeting, preparation for feedback session.	Room 118	
14.30 – 15.00	Open meeting to staff and students: <b>presentation of preliminary conclusions by the panel</b>	Room 110	
15.00	Departure to Tallinn		

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18**

Venue: EKKA Office (*Toompuiestee 30*)

Panel meeting & discussions, writing the assessment report  
Departures