



Assessment Report on Fulfilling the Requirements of the Secondary Condition of Institutional Accreditation

Tartu Health Care College

2023



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Introduction

Background and aim of the assessment

‘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 expert 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.

Educational institution must undergo institutional accreditation at least once every seven years based on the regulation *Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation* approved by HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education (hereinafter HAKA Council) http://ekka.archimedes.ee/wp-content/uploads/Guide_to_IA_18_en.pdf as of 14.06.2022.

The institutional accreditation of Tartu Health Care College took place in October 2019. HAKA Council decided at its meeting on 27.04.2020, that the next accreditation is to take place in seven years if the HEI meets certain requirements set by the HAKA Council.

The task of the current expert panel was to evaluate whether the requirements (secondary condition) set by the HAKA Council have been met by Tartu Health Care College.

The expert panel consisted of the following members:

Josette Denekens	Chair; Professor Emeritus, former Vice-Rector, University of Antwerpen (Belgium)
Marjatta Häsänen	Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Health and Well-being, Turku University of Applied Sciences (Finland)
Ruud Heijnen	Consultant in health care education; former Coordinator of International Cooperation for the Faculty of Health, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands)

Assessment process

The higher education institution sent its progress report on the fulfillment of the requirements of the secondary condition to HAKA on 27.02.2023.

The members of the expert panel wrote the report based on the written materials presented by the HEI and the information obtained in the interviews held electronically with the members of the university management, academic staff as well as students on May 11, 2023.

In the following sections, the expert panel summarises their findings regarding the fulfilment of the secondary condition and provides feedback on the progress the HEI has made in connection with experts' recommendations made in the institutional accreditation report in 2020.

In finalising the assessment report, the expert panel took into consideration comments made by the institution. The panel submitted the final report to HAKA on 30.06.2023.

The current report is a public document and made available on HAKA website after HAKA Council has made its decision.

General progress report

General assessment of the actions taken by the Tartu Health Care College with regard to improvement areas presented in the HAKA Council decision on 27.04.2020.

Comments

1. Strategic management

The creation of the development plan 2021-2025 started in 2019. All stakeholders were involved in creation of strategic goals and development plan. Many meetings with different groups are reported in SER.

Five activity areas are defined: learning and teaching, research and development, service to society, internationalisation and organisation and management. Implementation started in 2021 with action plan and work plans, aligned with the development plan for the different structural units.

Fulfillment of the strategic objectives of the Development Plan are monitored with quantitative and qualitative key indicators (5 areas of activity, with 11 actions and 14 KPI) that were determined across the activity areas.

Evidence for effectiveness for implementation and follow-up was found not only in the annual plans and in the overview of the activities, but also during the interviews during the online site visit.

The management team, staff members and students are proud that after lot of changes the results are visible in the organisation.

2. Resources

The structure of the THCC budget was changed in 2021 to be aligned with the development plan 2021-2025. MoER is allocating targeted resources (80% for support, 17% for performance and 3% for implementation results). Targeted funding, based on the consensus agreements have been accounted in the basic funding of the budget 2023. This makes that the budget allocated for THCC is increased by 15,8%.

In addition, the Government of the Republic has promised to increase the funding of higher education by 15% each year in the period 2024–2026.

The College has carried out risk analysis of funding resources and compiled in January 2021 a document *The Strategy for Financial Resources Assurance, Potential Risks and Risk Management Activities at Tartu Health Care College*. More focus has been on needs of society to offer new

programs or micro-credentials (small modules that can be followed by working students, in a way they can later follow the whole programme in a more flexible way) at bachelor and master level.

For infrastructural ameliorations in teaching and learning environment extra funding is found by European Structural Fund, by several Estonian organizations, in international networks. Extra material is installed in the simulation centre, also in e-health technology, in skills lab for podology and geriatrics. Lots of efforts have been made to optimize the infrastructure for teaching and learning, especially in the field of e-learning huge progress has been made. All necessary equipment for blended learning is in place.

A new unified career model with 11 positions has been implemented with clearly defined tasks for teaching, research, services to society and administration, defined in the personal development plans for each staff member on a yearly basis.

3. Quality system

The quality system has been revised in 2020 according to a goal-oriented model of management in order to create lines in 4 aligned steps: strategic goals, defined actions, measurement of results and evaluation of progress.

A quality manager is appointed since 2021. The responsibility of the position is coordinating and monitoring the data collection, analysis, improvement required for management.

Monitoring of objectives is performed on the basis of workplans and reports by the heads of the units, decision - making bodies and processes, following the action plan and the development plan 2021-2025. Clear lines of decision and actions are made more visible for all stakeholders.

At least once in a year an overview about the fulfilment of the objectives and wider topics of quality management is provided by top - management. In this way the involvement in the processes and quality awareness are improved.

A process mapping tool is created in 2022. The analysis and updating of the processes in detail is the issue to make processes more visible. This action is under way (2023-2024).

Feedback system has been revised in 2020. The College has improved the channels and implemented new ways to notify about the feedback results and improvement activities (on website, in annual reports, in meetings with students, in a newsletter, in information sessions). Tools to measure quality have been updated, as for example questionnaires for students with more specific questions according to feedback of students.

College website has been updated. Several IT solutions are implemented, as Microsoft 365, with Visio, the mailing system, Microsoft hub for teamwork, personnel software PlanPRO will be implemented. All these actions make administrative processes more efficient.

According to the rector an important improvement in the strategy of the College has been made. The expert panel is convinced of a clear alignment from mission, vision, core values to strategic goals to development plan to action plan and workplans and this is visible for all stakeholders, as the expert panel heard during interviews with personnel responsible for quality assurance and teachers.

4. Academic ethics

After institution wide discussion four core values were defined: professionalism, development oriented, human centred, health awareness.

Ethics are discussed in several courses and reflected on in seminars with involvement of students and supervisors. Students fill in the survey on practical training. Based on own research "Studying and factors influencing studying during the practical training" the nursing and midwifery curricula have been substantially improved the learning environment of the workplace-based learning. Structured self-assessment questionnaires are helping students focus on different aspects in self-reflection, including ethical dilemmas and teachers in giving feedback.

Since 2020 all graduates' theses have been checked on plagiarism. No cases were detected. Not all assignments are checked for plagiarism and not in all programmes plagiarism detection is done as the expert panel heard during the interviews. Based on the information the expert panel recommends to define criteria to determine sample size and selection criteria for those programme's that have decided to work with a sample-based approach. Since 2020 recommendations and etiquette for online meetings and instructions for the plagiarism detection software Ouriginal are available. Main principles are defined in study regulations and Good practice of Training and Studying are available to students on the intranet, in Estonian and in English.

5. Internationalisation

The aimed improvement of international learning experiences has led to the development of two international Masters' programs in radiography and health sciences (physiotherapy).

The previous accreditation report recommends that the approach to Internationalisation should be more strategic: cross-college goals should be clearly articulated, and all activities should be in coherence. In the DP, internationalisation is defined as one of the five strategic objectives. The objective is to support the quality of health care education and the recognition of the College. The college has defined key performance indicators and aimed target levels for the development related to internationalisation. The recommendations of institutional accreditation have been implemented. To improve the quality of the cooperation with foreign partner institutes and subsequently the quality of the learning process of students who go for an international internship, an analysis of mobility and cooperation with Erasmus+ partners started in 2022. Critical analysis will lead to review the content and volume of cooperation with all partner schools. According to the students, international experience is highly promoted by the College. Plenty of possibilities are available (both long-term and short-term experiences) and as Internationalisation at Home events. During the last year, 57 staff members have visited an institute or an event abroad.

Representatives of the teachers report that internationalisation is very much alive in the College and each teacher pays attention in his/her personal development plan attention to internationalisation.

6. Teaching staff

In the previous accreditation report it was mentioned that the College should pay continuous attention to the increase of the proportion of teachers with a doctoral degree and the creation of professorship. In 2021, the recommended positions of one professor and two associate professors were established. Additionally, two visiting associate professors are employed by January 2023. Since 2019, more full-time teachers are employed to reduce the high share of part-time lecturers. To give more attention to the development of pedagogical skills, many trainings have been organized.

There are individual training programs as well as cross-college trainings. To support new teachers, an employee training plan has been developed. This is in line with earlier recommendations and this process will be continued to be implemented.

Each staff member has his/her individual development plan; this plan contains aims, planned activities and achievements. International activities are part of these plans.

7. Study program

To give more input to Interprofessional education in all curricula, an internal evaluation has started in 2022. Interprofessional education (IPE) is one of the priorities of the DP and a working group has been formed and is in process. The implementation is ongoing.

The previous accreditation report recommends to extend the opportunities for teaching general competencies (e.g. leadership skills, quality management). According to the College's self-evaluation report and the Overview of the Follow-up activities, this is also an ongoing process. During the interviews, concrete examples could not be given, so therefore the consideration remains: continuous monitoring of the attention to the content of general competencies in every curriculum is recommended.

8. Learning and teaching

One of the planned improvement activities in the area of Learning and Teaching was: "analysis of the need for the creation of additional video lectures by the end of 2019. Extension of the range of elective subjects based on digital solutions."

According to the SER, video lectures are used on all curricula, e-support has been created for all subject courses and numerous mandatory and elective courses with digital solutions are offered. The recommendations have been implemented and continuous attention is paid to them.

Active learning methods are used in all programs as the methodology for generic (critical) thinking skills. Attention for critical thinking and reasoning is well recognisable in practice and more and more visible in theoretical sessions as well. Staff representatives confirm that they constantly seek for opportunities to enforce active learning. Students confirm that they are frequently exposed to active learning for instance in self-directed learning and in critical thinking exercises.

According to the students, the opportunities for "learning from each other" during clinical practice should be intensified. The formal possibilities offered by the college to share their experiences are limited and often in quite large groups. Students use informal opportunities, mainly by verbal exchange if possible, and via social media to share their experiences. Increasing the frequency of sessions to share experiences in small groups is recommended.

Pedagogical training for clinical instructors in the hospitals has been provided by the college and has reached quite many participants. This training is a continuous priority for the college but can't be implemented fully due to practical reasons. The new post of a coordinator of practical training has been established.

9. Student assessment

The assessment process has been under review and revision at the action plan level. Attention has also been paid to peer-support after the internship while there has been implemented seminars to share experiences and broach f.e.g. ethical dilemmas. Reflection is an important part in learning

process. The panel encourages to continue the division of smaller student group during those seminars and if it's possible in multiprofessional student groups.

10. Learning support systems

Student Council plays an important role in supervising and peer supporting students. Early identification of problems makes it possible to provide learners with proactive help and support, such as time planning. The position of study information specialist was established. The atmosphere for learning is very open and students value studying in TTHCC based on interviews among staff and students. That might empower the students to pass the studies. It might promote the students' well-being if TTHCC could consider increasing the amount of ECTS for students playing an active role in Study Council. In the interviews with students the expert panel heard that it's now only one ECTS for two years. However, it was delightful that the staff values the role and input of students.

11. RDC

Based on the outcomes of earlier accreditation, concrete steps and practices were developed to further promote and support research activities among the staff and learners. TTHCC has joined the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity in Estonia which support knowledge about, acceptance and entrenchment of research integrity in the national level. TTHCC has created new positions such as Research Coordinator and an ordinary full-time professor to promote applied research. The support given for apply external funding helps international cooperation and development actions. As a conclusion of interviews, the expert panel was impressed that TTHCC is an important and valued educational institution in regional and national and even international level. Both staff and students are proud to represent TTHCC.

12. Service to society

Students of all curricula are given an opportunity to participate in community services by choosing a service they are willing to provide. TTHCC plays significant role by close relationships with stakeholders. TTHCC can trust that they have been and will be contacted by the stakeholders if new solutions or practices are needed. Furthermore, the pro-active role of HEI can be seen to develop new services. One example is Family school (antenatal classes) in midwifery curriculum which was the most popular community service in 2021. It took place 27 times with about 3500 participants.

Commendations

- The visibility of the new strategic management is clear; plans are visible and discussed with all internal and external stakeholders; TTHCC is measuring and evaluating progress in all areas.
- The college has internationalisation brought to a higher level: the institutional development plan defines internationalisation as one of the priorities. In every curriculum internationalisation is well implemented and offers many opportunities for students, lecturers, and researchers.

Further considerations

- The expert panel recommends continuous monitoring to ensure the presence of general competencies in every curriculum (e.g., leadership skills, quality management, communication).

- It is recommended to intensify the interaction between students during clinical practice. Students can learn a lot from each other's experiences and therefore more often, more time, and small group discussions on personal development during clinical practice is recommended. The expert panel recommends to define criteria to determine sample size and selection criteria for those programme's that have decide to work with a sample-based approach for detecting plagiarism.

Report on fulfilling the requirements of the secondary condition

At its meeting on 27.04.2020 HAKA Council decided that the next institutional accreditation of Tartu Health Care College will take place in seven years but set a secondary condition that the college must meet in three years.

The following are the requirements set by the HAKA Council to be met by Tartu Health Care College, and the expert panel's assessment on the developments the College has made in this regard.

Strategic management: Planning the development of the College is not sufficiently targeted and systematic. The Development Plan 2015-2020 of the College rather fulfils the role of an action plan, as it lacks strategic goals that would ensure movement towards the implementation of an ambitious mission and vision. There are no measurable goals in several areas that are important for the fulfilment of the mission (innovation, research and development, internationalization, quality of learning).

Assessment of the expert panel: the secondary condition is fully met

Evidence and analysis

IMPROVEMENT AREA AND PLANNED IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY 1.1. PROVIDED IN THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT OF INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION	The targets established in the preparation process of the Development Plan 2015-2020 need to be reviewed and revised, considering the changes in society. Planned improvement activity: to analyse in the preparation process of the Development Plan 2020 -2025 whether the stated targets are relevant and up to date.
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In the SER the expert team read that planning and development of the College Development Plan 2021-2025 was based on the revised national strategic documents, changes in society and on the feedback obtained within the institutional accreditation process.

According to the management team the first step in the goal - oriented strategy the College uses in the new strategic approach was „the way they plan“as said by the rector during the interview.

The creation of the development plan 2021-2025 started in 2019. All stakeholders were involved in creation of the strategic goals and the development plan. The process started with an online survey involving students, staff, alumni, external partners. In this way the TTHCC became feedback about the performance of the College, about expectations of the stakeholders and about possibilities for the future. Thereafter target groups have discussed the conceptualising and formulation of the mission, vision, and core values of the College.

Many meetings with different groups are reported in SER (in total 20 meetings with rectorate, 8 pedagogical board meetings, 5 meetings of the working group, 3 meetings with main target groups, 1 meeting with the advisory board, 7 meetings of the College council).

During the interview with the management team, it became obvious that the College is open-minded, knows what is going on in society, in the field of health care because daily contacts with all external stakeholders on important board meetings of different policy structures. The College uses its networks to define strategic goals and strategic decisions.

Furthermore, the management stated that innovation is part of the basic values. Rector said: "We're open minded and trying to be leading." In line with the standard management processes innovation is everyday business. The College has very tight connections with the society through board meetings, networks (international, national, and local). As example participation in different bodies was mentioned e.g., about the shortage of nurses and other health professionals.

In this way the expert team is convinced of the relevance and the up-to-date state of the „common“ strategic objectives/goals that have been chosen.

IMPROVEMENT AREA/RECOMMENDATION 1.1 PROVIDED BY THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE OF HAKA	Planning the development of the College is not sufficiently targeted and systematic. The Development Plan 2015–2020 of the College rather fulfils the role of an action plan, as it lacks strategic goals that would ensure movement towards the implementation of an ambitious mission and vision. In the new Development Plan of the College, it is important to ensure the coherence of the mission, vision and values and strategic goals, and to define measurable key indicators that would be clearly related to the fulfilment of the strategic goals.
IMPROVEMENT AREA/RECOMMENDATION 1.2 PROVIDED BY THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE OF HAKA	In a sense, the College is in a transition phase caused by both internal and external factors: changes in legislation, changes in personnel management, financial challenges, the need to increase the volume and level of research (especially due to the addition of Master's studies). The role of strategic leadership is critical right now. The mission of the College is "to provide competitive, high-quality, innovative, international, development-based and research-based lifelong learning in an inspiring environment in the field of health and social care". At the same time, there are no measurable goals in several areas that are important for the fulfilment of the mission (innovation, research and development, internationalization, quality of learning). To ensure the development of the College in the desired direction, it is necessary to set clear goals and plan activities in such areas as pedagogical innovation, research, and internationalization.

With a clear mission that defines the nature of the College, the overall goal of the vision, the way to go with well-defined core values the College has elaborated a development plan with 5 strategic goals for all areas (general education, vocational education and higher education, the Estonian Education strategy 2021-2035) and for all topics: research and development and creativity, internationalisation, quality of learning and teaching, innovation and social services, teaching and learning and pedagogical innovation, organisation and quality management.

The 5 strategic areas are: learning and teaching, research and development, service to society, internationalisation, organisation and management.

According to the interviews it has been made clear that the focus and the way to go is aligned with the mission, vision and core values and that measurable key indicators (qualitative and quantitative, defined in all areas) are in place to monitor in order to fulfil the strategic goals the coming years. Tools to measure are updated. The action plan is aligned with the development plan, with well-defined responsibilities and deadlines. Workplans are yearly submitted by the heads of the units and the College and adhere to the institutional action plan and the development plan.

Evidence for effectiveness for implementation and performance and follow-up was found in the annual reports and in the overview of activities.

The rector made clear that the new strategic approach is very clear for everyone in 4 steps, first what they are going to do, second how they do it, third how they measure and fourth how they evaluate. She underlined that all stakeholders are going in the same well-defined direction and that there is a huge difference in the way of steering between how they do it now and before. This statement was confirmed during interviews with the stakeholders (teachers, students and quality assurance staff)

Examples were given to show the way of working:

1. Empowerment of research with
 - 2 clearly defined lines: curriculum development and society.
 - A new career model has been introduced with more clearly defined responsibilities in teaching, research and service to society. 11 positions are defined, criteria for promotion are transparent according to the teachers.
 - More attention for research in every curriculum, including EBP and the system of grading
 - Research project relevant for society issues.
 - Values behind the meaning of research in applied sciences are clarified. This is the case for the basic (Bachelor-level) programs and for the Master programs.
 - On institutional level there is more support for research for teachers by defining dedicated time for research in the individual development plans and by support in research activities including in writing the proposal for a project/grant.
 - A research coordinator position has been created to steer the empowerment processes. He is also the head of the research council.
 - Systematic support in research activities including the writing of the proposal / planning.
 - This has led to more attention for research among students. This is measured and monitored. They are more involved in research.
 - A rewarding system is introduced: extra points for teachers when students are involved in the research projects and external cooperation with stakeholders is also rewarded.
2. The other example was defining common strategy for quality of management. A common view among all staff members has been created. The expert team heard the testimonials of teachers and student. This has led to a huge change in quality culture with clear lines and responsibilities. (see quality assurance).

During the interview it was clear that interprofessional learning is on the agenda but that a clear strategy for implementation is not yet ready. Interdisciplinarity is already daily live in health care practice. Health care givers should be better prepared. The expert team strongly suggest to take the opportunity to define actions for implementation of interdisciplinary learning and teaching, especially a transdisciplinary approach would be innovative.

Conclusion: the secondary condition is fully met

The strategy is now targeted and mostly systematically implemented. This “clear set out lines” in management are recognisable for staff as we heard during the interviews.

In conclusion we can say that the expert team found evidence for this goal -oriented management that has realised a huge change in the management style. Finally, this results in more commitment of the staff and in more satisfaction with real quality enhancement as outcome as the expert team heard and saw during the interviews of staff and students.

Strengths

- The College is commended for strong leadership, with strategic management with well defined objectives, a clear way to go, easy to monitor and demonstrate progress in quality.
- The staff is commended for their high commitment to realize the goals of the development plan and for their enthusiasm and the way they are proud of the realization of the College.

Opportunities for further improvement

- During the interview it was clear that interprofessional learning is on the agenda but that a clear strategy for implementation is not yet ready. Interdisciplinarity is already daily live in health care practice. Health care givers should be better prepared. The expert team strongly suggest to take the opportunity to define actions for implementation of interdisciplinary learning and teaching, especially a transdisciplinary approach would be innovative.

Resources: The management of funds is not sufficiently in line with the development goals of the College. Risk management is deficient.
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Assessment of the expert panel: the secondary condition is fully met

Evidence and analysis

IMPROVEMENT AREA/RECOMMENDATION 1.3 PROVIDED BY THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE OF HAKA	The management of funds is not sufficiently in line with the development goals of the College. When allocating resources, a model should be introduced that allows resources to be directed to the development of strategically important areas such as research, service to society, internationalization, development of new Master's programmes. The model should define resource allocation criteria that will ensure targeted and sustainable progress in the direction of the mission and the achievement of the vision.
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According to the SER the structure of the TTHKK budget was changed in 2021 in order to be aligned with the objectives of the development plan 2021-2025.

Budgets for research and development and for internationalisation have been added to the budget structure of higher education and vocational education.

Budgets regarding the development of learning and teaching, service to society, and development of new study programmes, are planned as part of the budget meant for curricula that is given in the study cost budget for higher education and vocational education.

THE IMPROVEMENT AREA AND PLANNED IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY 1.2. PROVIDED IN THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT OF INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION	The changed model of state activity support in higher education does not facilitate budgetary increase of a higher education institution with good performance indicators. Planned improvement activity: to pay attention to the limitations of the state funding model and active explanation in order to ensure the sustainable funding of the College.
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The College is very proud that under his leadership, MoER is allocating targeted resources (80% for support, 17% for performance and 3% for implementation results).

Targeted funding, based on the consensus agreements have been accounted in the basic funding of the budget 2023. This makes that the budget allocated for TTHKK is increased by 15,8%.

In addition, the Government of the Republic has promised to increase the funding of higher education by 15% each year in the period 2024–2026.

The expert panel recommends to strengthen the strategy to attract diverse financial resources, especially in the context of research and development more efforts can be made.

According to the SER a more active cooperation with the partners is needed for generating ideas for project proposals. In the KPI's the expert team has seen that contact with external stakeholders is planned every 2nd year. The expert team would suggest more intensive contacts with strategic partners, nationally and internationally, at least on yearly basis to define common projects and the road to steer and how to adjust for coming challenges.

IMPROVEMENT AREA/RECOMMENDATION 1.4. PROVIDED BY THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE OF HAKA	In a context of limited financial resources, risk management is critical. In order to mitigate financial risks and ensure sustainability, a risk-based scenario must be established, which takes into account various factors and includes risk mitigation activities. This is necessary so that the reduction of resources does not hinder the strategic development of the College.
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The College has carried out risk analysis of funding resources and compiled in January 2021 a document The Strategy for Financial Resources Assurance, Potential Risks and Risk Management Activities at Tartu Health Care College. According to this analysis is concluded that more focus needs to be on needs of society to offer new programs in the format of micro-credentials (small modules that can be followed by working students, in a way they can later follow the whole programme in a more flexible way) in vocational training. In this way more income is based on performance.

For infrastructural ameliorations in teaching and learning environment extra funding is found by European Structural Fund, by several Estonian organizations, in international networks. Extra material is installed in the simulation centre, also in e-health technology, in skills lab. The simulation centre has been further developed.

Technology for online learning is installed, Moodle platform makes it possible for students to follow courses when they have time, more camera's and video's and microphones are installed.

Lots of efforts have been made to optimize the infrastructure for teaching and learning, especially in the field of e-learning huge progress has been made. All necessary equipment for blended learning is in place. Finally, the monitoring information system makes it possible to work with statistical data for practical training.

IMPROVEMENT AREA/RECOMMENDATION 1.5. PROVIDED BY THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE OF HAKA	The development interviews of academic staff should also provide them with a direction to focus on in the coming period – _serving society, pedagogical innovation or research and development, as well as the integration of teaching and research.
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New career model with 11 positions with clearly defined qualifications and tasks is in place, with goals and responsibilities, clearly defined in the job descriptions.

Evaluation of 71 staff members in 2022 took place according to the new model with assessment of activities and results. The purpose of evaluation is to provide teachers with feedback on the correspondence of their performance to the four areas (teaching, research and development, service to society, professional and organizational development) during the last five years. During interviews the expert team heard that the supervisor of the teacher is leading the feedback meeting with each staff member. Clear targets for each staff member are defined and follow-up is assured each year including the advice for trainings if needed.

As for professional development the strategy is based on the values in the development plan. Purpose is to develop everybody (academic and non-academic). The DP defines lines/topics for staff.

Examples: leadership skills and quality assurance management.

The strategy is discussed and checked twice a year.

Full time teachers normally all participate in the offered training. Early planning is important!, according to the rector Staff with small contracts have the possibility to use recordings of the training. Generally, the participation rate is very good (interview with management).

Conclusion: the secondary condition is fully met

According to the SER and the additional information of the interviews, the expert team has seen a different situation for resources as in 2020 with more income from the ministry for research, with more income by performance of services for society Much strategic progress has been made with clear results. Resources are allocated according to the strategic goals. Risk management analysis has been made.

Strengths

- Strong position for negotiating financing at ministerial level
- The College is commended for the modern infrastructure, e.g. the simulation centre

Opportunities for further improvement

- Even with the better financial situation the expert team recommends to strengthen the strategy to attract more diverse financial resources, especially in the context of research and development more efforts can be made on international level.
- The expert team would suggest more intensive contacts with strategic partners, nationally and internationally, at least on yearly basis to define common projects and the road to steer and how to adjust for coming challenges.

Quality culture: The EFQM model has been used in the quality management of the College since 2003, but its implementation in the College as a whole is not systematic and does not support the pursuit of strategic goals of the College at different levels (structural units, study programmes, support systems).

Assessment of the expert panel: the secondary condition is fully met

Evidence and analysis

1. Area of concern in the previous accreditation report to reach fulfilment of the secondary condition related to Quality Culture:

The EFQM model has been used in the quality management of the College since 2003, but its implementation in the College as a whole is not systematic and does not support the pursuit of strategic goals of the College at different levels (structural units, study programmes, support systems).

During the panel's meeting with the management team, the rector explains that an important improvement in the strategy of the college is related to quality management. A clear consistency is visible between the College' general strategy (as put down in the Development Plan) to concrete actions on the level of the workplan. The objective was to create a common view among all staff members on quality management. This has led to a huge change in the quality culture. Actually, very clear lines exist, and responsibilities are described, and this is confirmed in different sessions.

To implement the College quality management system at the administrative level, the position of quality manager was founded in 2021. The quality manager coordinates and monitors the processes of data collection, analysis, and improvement required for management.

Since 2021, the College has improved the monitoring system for the fulfilment of strategic objectives. This workflow has ensured better awareness of the College strategic objectives, allowing clear monitoring of the current situation regarding the fulfilment of the objectives at different levels.

Annual reports and discussions with the college staff about targets and achievements, has led to improve quality awareness and commitments among all staff members. This is presented by the management team during the meeting with the panel and subsequently confirmed by staff representatives.

2. According to a recommendation in the previous accreditation report:

The Quality Manual as an instrument of operational management should be more in line with reality. The processes and division of responsibilities described in it must be implemented throughout the College.

The renewal of the Quality Manual has started; the listed improvement activities which are aimed to make the descriptions of all processes at the College available and easy to follow for all staff members and students, in this way reducing the management load of the parties involved. The aim is that the staff as well as the students would have a clear understanding of the division of responsibilities and how the main and supporting processes are functioning at the College.

Relevant processes have been described and the process of implementation is ongoing. New IT solutions are used in the effective implementation of the quality management system.

3. According to a recommendation in the previous accreditation report:

The publicising system of feedback results needs updating. The results of satisfaction surveys are not systematically communicated to learners. Learners need to be informed about the actions taken based on their feedback.

The College quality management includes the feedback system which has been revised since 2020: feedback collection is based on the principle of continuous improvement – surveys are planned, surveys are conducted, results are evaluated, and performance of activities is improved based on the evaluation results. Feedback collection at the College is focused on all stakeholders: students, staff, alumni, employers, and participants in continuous education. Staff and students confirm and recognize the outcomes of this process. Staff representatives report that the feedback system works more quickly than before and inside processes (derived from the Development Plan) are much clearer. A table called “Matrix of TTHKK feedback surveys” shows exactly the planned frequency, addressee, content and communication tool of the feedback. The Quality Manager plays organizing and monitoring role.

Conclusion: secondary condition is fully met

The quality system has been revised in 2020 according to a goal-oriented model of management. In the actual situation, the panel has seen a QM system in which monitoring of objectives is performed on the basis of workplans and reports. Decision-making bodies and processes follow the action plan and the development plan. Clear lines of decision and actions are made more visible for all stakeholders.

An important improvement in the strategy of the College has been made.

Strengths

- The renewed Quality Management system is in accordance with the College’ Development plan.
- The awareness for Quality management is visible in the entire organization of the College.
- Support systems to ensure effective feedback are in use and this has led to systematic and effective communication and report to all stakeholders.

Research, development and/or other creative activities: Although the College is successful in popularizing the research and development activities carried out, the strategic management in the field of research and development and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the priority directions is vague. The R&D support system is deficient.

Assessment of the expert panel: the secondary condition is fully met

Evidence and analysis

Tartu Health Care College has made a clear progress in planning and implementing applied research, development and/or other creative activities (RDCA). Research and development of TTHKK is coordinated by the research and development board (TAK). New members and a leader were appointed after previous accreditation. Based on the main strategic directions, the priority research areas of TTHKK were determined for 2021-2025: Evidence-based learning and teaching & Health awareness of the society. In 2022 professional higher education institutions in Estonia joined the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity which support knowledge about, acceptance and entrenchment of research integrity at the national level.

TTHKK has created new positions such as Research Coordinator and an ordinary full-time professor to promote applied research. The interviews of Administration and Quality Assurance personal confirmed the support given for apply external funding which helps international cooperation and development actions.

It's a good sign in Estonian national level that Ministry of Education and Research plans to allocate funds also for applied research and development activities during this year 2023, in addition to fund university research. It's provided resources targeted to research and development, in the amount of 5% of the activity support. However, in the interview of Human Resource Manager she appointed as one of the biggest challenges, how to support the staff: teachers, researchers, and managers.

There has been paid more attention to topics regarding ethics and how ethical issues goes throughout the curricula since the first semester. During the interviews with students also the academic ethics turned out to be familiar among students, especially for Master Student when he told about research protocol and f.eg. ethical approval. Teaching staff told in their interviews that learners can also take part in project working throughout the curriculum and that was confirmed by students' interviews, at least in thesis as an asked example.

Learners are encouraged and taught how to use evidence-based knowledge since the beginning of their studies (f.eg. critical reasoning/ nursing program) and the theme continues systematically throughout the curriculum. From the interviews of teaching staff and students it can be seen that the learners are encouraged and challenged to read lot of scientific articles and utilize research results and also get familiar to various research designs According the interviews of staff the active discussion about the benefits and threats of artificial intelligent has been started.

Conclusion: secondary condition is fully met

Based on the outcomes of previous accreditation, concrete steps and practices were developed to further promote and support research activities among the staff and learners. The formal documents, additional documents asked and the information gathered from the interviews give enough evidence that the organization has now more systematic and supportive approach and follow up to RDCA. Thus, the proactive role of HEI will be strengthened.

Strengths

- TTHKK has now clear research areas and applied research procedure how to apply external funding and execute applied research. Recent created positions and the role of TAK (Research and development board) promote to manage and support the research activities.

Opportunities for further improvement

- TTHKK would benefit about the clear alignment and plan how to handle with the artificial intelligent concerning the learning assignments and thesis.