

The decision of the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education

Tartu Health Care College

Decision on the initial assessment of the Master's programme in the Physiotherapy of Health Care study programme group

05.06.2023

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education decided that the Master's programme in the Physiotherapy of Health Care study programme group of Tartu Health Care College partially conforms to the level required.

Pursuant to subsections 9(3) and 10(1) of the Higher Education Act and clause 32.4 of the document *Guidelines for Initial Assessment and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups*, established by the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA), the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (hereinafter referred to as the Council) states the following:

1. On 20.12.2023, the Ministry of Education and Research submitted the information required for the initial assessment of the Master's programme in the Physiotherapy of Health Care study programme group of Tartu Health Care College (hereinafter referred to as the higher education institution) to HAKA.
2. On 07.03.2023, the Director of HAKA approved the following composition of the committee for initial assessment (hereinafter referred to as the Committee):

Linzette Deidre Morris	Head of the Committee; Assistant Professor, Qatar University, Qatar
Kristel Jakobson-Pallo	PwC Eesti, Senior Consultant, member of the Committee as a student, Estonia
Cliona O'Sullivan	Associate Professor, University College Dublin, Ireland
Reio Vilipuu	Employers representative, physiotherapist and lymphatic therapist, owner of Tursekeskus OÜ

3. The Assessment Committee reviewed the information submitted by the higher education institution and the Ministry. Web conversations with the representatives of the higher education institution were held on 11.04.2023.



4. The Committee sent the draft assessment report to the higher education institution on 11.05.2023.
5. The higher education institution sent its comments on the assessment report on 23.05.2023.
6. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the HAKA Bureau on 24.05.2023. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision.
7. The Committee's assessments were as follows:

Quality of instruction	Conforms to the level required
Resources	Conforms to the level required
Sustainability	Partially conforms to the level required

8. The Council with eleven members present discussed these received documents in its session on 5.06.2023 and, based on the assessment report and the information submitted by the higher education institution to the Estonian Education Information System, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations, and suggestions for further development regarding the higher education institution.

8.1. Quality of instruction:

Strengths:

- 1) The study programme has been prepared in compliance with the National Health Plan 2020–2030, including the direction contained in the plan for strengthening physiotherapy services in first contact care.
- 2) External experts, clinical partners and other stakeholders were involved in the development of the study programme in close cooperation.
- 3) The teaching staff are highly qualified. Several of them are active in carrying out the applied higher education study programme, which makes it easier to launch the Master's programme.

Areas for improvement, and recommendations:

- 1) Since foreign students are also welcome to the study programme, all necessary documents concerning the regulation of studies must be made available in English on the website of the higher education institution.

8.2. Resources

Strengths:

- 1) The infrastructure needed to carry out the studies at the higher education institution is at a high level and supplied with everything that is necessary.
- 2) The library of the higher education institution is well stocked, and the students have access to University of Tartu Library as well.

8.3. Sustainability

Strengths:

- 1) In distributing financial resources between departments and study programmes, the bottom-up approach is applied and the analysis of needs, and priorities, are relied on.
- 2) The launch of the study programme is facilitated by the existing teaching staff, learning tools, and other resources and support systems.

Areas for improvement, and recommendations:

- 1) The risks associated with opening the study programme (paid education, lack of state funding, risk of student dropout, unknown number of students to be admitted) require a more thorough risk analysis and longer-term financial forecast.
- 2) The Master's programme in Physiotherapy has been largely modelled on the existing English-language Master's programme in Radiography. The number of students in this study programme is, however, rather small and significantly smaller than originally planned. Therefore, there is currently no certainty about the viability of the Master's programme in Physiotherapy.

9. If the assessment in one field of assessment is “partially conforms to the level required” and the remaining assessments are “conforms to the level required”, the Assessment Council weighs the strengths and areas for improvement of the study programme group and adopts one of the following decisions:

- a) adopts a decision that the studies conform to the level required, and makes a proposal to the Minister of Education and Research that the higher education institution be granted the right to organise studies in the respective study programme group and studies, or
- b) adopts a decision that the studies partially conform to the level required, and makes a proposal to the Minister of Education and Research that the higher education institution be granted the right to organise studies in the respective study programme group and studies for one to three years.

10. The Council weighed the strengths and areas of improvement of the higher education institution in organising the Master's programme in the Physiotherapy study programme group and, considering the areas of improvement specified in clause 8 of the decision:

- Pursuant to subsection 3(7)7) of the Standard of Higher Education, *financing sources for conducting studies and for research, development and creative activities related to Doctoral study and a strategy supporting their obtainment are in place.* Pursuant to subitem 7.2 of clause 9 of HAKA's guidelines *Guidelines for Initial Assessment and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups: when planning studies in the study programme group, the higher education institution has conducted a risk analysis and devised a long-term financial projection, which among other things includes the calculation of a student place, an analysis of risks stemming from the operating environment and planned mitigating measures thereof.* The risks associated with opening the study programme (paid education, lack of state funding, risk of student dropout, unknown number of students to be admitted) require a more thorough risk analysis and longer-term financial forecast. The Master's programme in Physiotherapy has been largely modelled on the existing English-language Master's programme in Radiography. The number of students in this study programme is, however, rather small and significantly smaller than originally planned. Therefore, there is currently no certainty about the viability of the Master's programme in Physiotherapy.

DECIDED THE FOLLOWING:

- 1) The studies partially conform to the level required;**
- 2) To make a proposal to the Minister of Education and Research to grant Tartu Health Care College the right to organise the Master's programme in the Physiotherapy of Health Care study programme group for three years.**

The decision was adopted with 11 votes in favour. 0 were against.

11. A person who finds that his or her rights are violated or his or her freedoms are restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the HAKA Assessment Council within 30 days after he or she became or should have become aware of the decision. The Assessment Council shall send the challenge to the HAKA Appeals Committee, which shall, within five days of receipt of the challenge, provide a written unbiased opinion to the Assessment Council on the validity of the challenge. The Council shall resolve the challenge within 10 days of its receipt, taking into account the reasoned opinion of the Appeals Committee. If further examination of the challenge is necessary, the Assessment Council

may extend the deadline for examining the challenge by up to 30 days. Judicial contestation of a decision is possible within 30 days from the date of service of the decision by filing an appeal with the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

Hillar Bauman

Secretary of the Council