

Decision Regarding the Assessment of the Medicine Study Programme Group

University of Tartu

28/01/2015

The Quality Assessment Council of the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency decided to approve the assessment report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Medicine study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu in five years.

The University of Tartu submitted for evaluation under the Medicine Study Programme Group the following study programmes:

- Medicine, integrated study
- Medicine (in English), integrated study
- Pharmacy, integrated study
- Dentistry, integrated study

Assessment Committee

Chris Stephens (Chair)	University of Southampton, Faculty of Medicine, Professor, Associate Dean (UK)
Ulrike Beier	Medical University of Innsbruck, Department of Restorative and Prosthetic Dentistry, Associate Professor (Austria)
Lars Bohlin	University of Uppsala, Department of Medicinal Chemistry, Faculty of Pharmacy farmakognoosia professor (Sweden)
Jose Dias	University of Coimbra, student (Portugal)
Pekka Kääpä	University of Turku, Department of Pediatrics and Medical Education Research and Development Centre, Professor Emeritus (Finland)
Margus Viigimaa	Head of the Centre of Cardiology, North Estonia Medical Centre; Director of the Institute of Cardiovascular Medicine, Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia)

The Committee's observations on the study programme group level

Strengths:

- *The Faculty's student affairs staff and the University's Study Information System provide students with needed support.*
- *There is an effective tutoring system led by students.*
- *Students are diligent and committed to their studies.*

Areas for improvement and recommendations:

- *It is advisable to consider the establishment of admission requirements that are based on the specifics of the study programme group, and that facilitate the assessment of both academic ability and practical skills.*
- *It is necessary to identify the applicants' professional aptitudes for their future professions.*
- *It is necessary to promote a wider use of the University's system of peer development and review, with regard to the teaching staff in the Medicine study programme group.*

The Committee's Comments on the Study Programmes

Medicine / Medicine in English, integrated study

Strengths

- *It is commendable that students are involved in the work of the Programme Council and thus placed in the innovative role of a "critical friend".*
- *Buildings, facilities and learning conditions, as well as the University Library and the University Hospital, are impressive. The Faculty has at its disposal excellent teaching and IT resources, and Wi-Fi.*
- *Students are highly capable, hardworking, caring and committed. Students believe that they are provided with a variety of opportunities for feedback and that their concerns are always listened to.*

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

- *It is necessary to review the content of the study programme systematically and critically, and to remove non-essential material.*
- *It is necessary to analyse the compliance of subjects with learning outcomes and to identify any potential gaps.*

- *Not enough attention is paid to assessment of some of the programme learning outcomes (e.g. clinical and communication skills). Teaching of communication skills is not well enough developed and needs to be improved.*
- *Care must be taken that the students acquire knowledge and skills like communication, teamwork, leadership, ethics, diversity and patient safety, and that such knowledge and skills will be assessed. In addition to assessing students' knowledge, their practical/clinical skills and behaviours need to be assessed as well; for example, through the OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination).*
- *It is necessary to develop a staff development strategy, particularly for clinical teachers, to support the use of active teaching and learning methods. The teaching staff have to be offered favourable opportunities for sharing and exchanging their teaching experiences.*
- *It is necessary to find more student placement opportunities in different healthcare facilities for clinical teaching.*
- *Students must be informed of the changes made in responses to their feedback.*
- *The Medicine in English programme is only in its second year and needs continuing development and preparations for later years. As it is a new developing programme, the quality should be monitored closely.*

Pharmacy, integrated study

Strengths

- *The role of Professor Veski in developing the pharmacy programme and facilities deserves recognition and acknowledgement.*
- *The learning environment in the new institute building is modern and well organised for both theoretical and practical work.*
- *It is an advantage of the study programme that practicing pharmacists and specialists in different fields of pharmacy are involved in the teaching process.*
- *Research work at the end of the programme is a very useful part of the studies and gives students an opportunity to understand the research process.*
- *The development of the study programme is supported by an effective student feedback system.*
- *Students' involvement in peer teaching (e.g. in the form of a seminar) serves as an example of good practice.*

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

- *Professional standards for pharmacists in Estonia have not been updated; therefore, the changes necessary for meeting EU standards for learning outcomes are not included in the study programme.*
- *The programme should be modernised to reduce the excess of factual knowledge and allow time to develop analytical and critical thinking and social skills. It is of utmost importance to continue to modernise the different subjects according to high-level international standards.*
- *Drug development, community pharmacy, and the regulatory aspects of pharmacology need more attention in the study programme. The depth of study in Botany, Latin and Biochemistry in the study programme is too extensive; it should be reduced or distributed over a longer study period to make room for new subjects.*
- *The Faculty is advised to develop a specific plan for study programme development.*
- *The programme team needs to find different ways to enhance students' professionalism and shape their professional identities. Students need to be encouraged to develop their communication skills with patients and other health professionals in order to strengthen their confidence.*
- *The difference in knowledge levels of newly admitted students (e.g. in natural science) is a serious problem which has increased the dropout rate in the first year of the study programme.*
- *The teaching process is too rigid, and the reason for this seems to lie in an excessive workload of the academic staff.*
- *Practical training could be extended to hospitals and pharmacies across the country.*
- *More students should continue studies at a PhD level to strengthen academic pharmacy in Estonia.*
- *It is necessary to formulate a staff development strategy for teaching staff which includes trainings in student-centred learning and active learning techniques.*
- *It is necessary to increase resources for recruitment of future staff on a high academic level.*
- *It is necessary to strengthen possibilities for international contacts and collaboration in pharmacy teaching and research.*
- *It is necessary to ensure that there is adequate funding to cover the operating costs and to continuously modernise the equipment of laboratories.*

Dentistry, integrated study

Strengths

- *Dentistry is a well-designed and delivered programme with many examples of good practice.*
- *The study programme is essentially organised and conducted according to the European standards.*
- *Teaching is carried out in small groups (8 students) facilitating a personal approach and supervision as well as a focus on patient treatment in the clinic.*
- *All lectures, videos and quizzes are available on the Moodle platform which supports students' learning .*
- *There are web-based student portfolios that record students' progress and self-analyses. The study programme is evaluated by using questionnaires on the Moodle platform.*
- *Students are highly capable and hardworking, and have great motivation and a constant interest in upgrading their skills.*
- *The tutoring system plays an important role in students' integration and counselling.*
- *There is good cooperation between students and the academic staff.*
- *A large proportion of students want to continue their studies in residency training at Tartu; the graduate employment rate is high.*
- *Employers appreciate the professional preparation of the graduates.*
- *The teaching staff is highly qualified and motivated.*
- *Academic staff has research experience and participates regularly in scientific conferences. There is a mentoring programme for teaching staff.*

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations

- *There is a high dropout rate in the first clinical year.*
- *Currently it is not possible to recruit international students.*
- *Students should study and practise aspects of clinical dentistry from the first academic year.*
- *The programme team should consider opportunities for interprofessional learning with dental hygienists and dental technicians.*
- *It is necessary to establish an unscreened clinic where students undertake initial diagnosis and treatment planning sessions to better prepare them for general dental practice working with a wide variety of patients.*

- *The Faculty must find funds for ongoing capital replacement costs of major equipment and dental chairs.*
- *A concern is that graduates have limited experience in prosthodontics, which is caused by the high cost of prosthetic treatment for patients who do not always trust the inexperienced students to perform the necessary procedures.*
- *It is necessary to increasingly support the Russian-speaking Estonian students with Estonian language classes.*

Further information: [Assessment Report](#)