

## Decision Regarding the Assessment of the Business and Administration Study Programme Group Estonian University of Life Sciences

12/06/2017

The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the Estonian University of Life Sciences in seven years

On the basis of subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act and point 41.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', authorised in points 3.7.3 and 3.7.1 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education; the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of EKKA (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 14.03.2016 the Estonian University of Life Sciences and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct the quality assessment of the study programme group.
2. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 3.04.2017, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the Estonian University of Life Sciences (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

<b>Roger Levy</b>	Chair of the Committee, Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK
<b>Anne Perkiö</b>	Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Finland
<b>Markus Breuer</b>	Professor, SRH University Heidelberg, Germany
<b>Tambet Hook</b>	MPS Eesti, Estonia
<b>Veronica Zäro</b>	Student, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia

3. The Estonian University of Life Sciences submitted the following study programmes for evaluation under the Business and Administration study programme group:

**Rural Entrepreneurship and Financial Management (BA)**

### **Economics and Entrepreneurship (MA)**

### **Accounting and Financial Management (MA)**

4. The Estonian University of Life Sciences submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 15.02.2017 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 22.02.2017.
5. An assessment visit was made to the Estonian University of Life Sciences on 25.04.2017.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 13.05.2017, EKKA forwarded it to the Estonian University of Life Sciences for its comments on 19.05.2017, and the University delivered its response on 29.05.2017.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 1.06.2017. That assessment report is an integral part of the decision, and is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee's final assessment report along with the University's self-evaluation report to the Council members on 2.06.2017.
9. The Council with 9 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 12.06.2017 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the Estonian University of Life Sciences.

#### Strengths

- 1) The study programmes have a practical orientation and are popular. Graduate employment rates are high.
- 2) Teaching staff are qualified, dedicated and caring.
- 3) Employer support for the study programmes is strong.
- 4) The combination of theoretical and applied economics courses in the study programmes enable the graduates to work in enterprises, development projects, government authorities and local governments as well as to create their own enterprises. Knowledge of the connections between business administration and a green economy enables students to better understand the complexity of the agricultural sector.
- 5) The number of international students enrolled in the programmes is increasing (currently from a total of 22 countries).
- 6) Students highly appreciate the contributions of practitioners from outside the University who conduct study programmes.
- 7) Students are involved in the lecturers' practically oriented research projects.
- 8) Procedures for evaluating the academic staff are well developed. Annual development interviews are conducted.
- 9) The research of the academic staff is linked well to their teaching. Students' theses are often linked to the research topics of their supervisors. Approximately 1/3 of the income of the institute comes from R&D activities.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) It is necessary to develop strategies to address an existing demographic situation and a related decline in potential student numbers.
- 2) Opportunities for pedagogical training and implementation of active learning principles must be sought in collaboration with other higher education institutions. With regard to developing pedagogical skills of lecturers, special attention should be paid to the staff members who practice a lecturer-oriented approach in teaching. The teaching staff could also share best practices and make use of appropriate MOOCs.

- 3) It is necessary to expand an international outreach of study programmes, learning materials and composition of lecturers in order to prepare students for the global labour market. Since student mobility is hampered by a number of problems, it is necessary to involve more international lecturers for longer terms, recruit more international students, increase the number of subjects taught in English as well as use more MOOCs and video lectures in teaching and learning.
- 4) Social skills, being very important for the employability, should be strengthened in the study programmes.
- 5) Practical training comprises 5 ECTS credits in bachelor degree studies and 3 ECTS credits in master degree studies, which is considered by both the students and the assessment committee to be too few. Students should receive more assistance in finding (especially paid) practical training places. The University's unit responsible for practical trainings should significantly expand its profile, and learn from best international practices. The University should also increase the number of enterprises which offer paid practical trainings.
- 6) When developing study programmes, the following courses should be kept in mind: sales and sales management, entrepreneurship, and project management. More courses taught in English should be offered in order to develop students' language skills.
- 7) The Study Information System (SIS) should be more closely integrated with the Moodle platform and should enable the University to better monitor students' progress.
- 8) The number of contact hours for the teaching staff is too large.
- 9) Only a few staff members are active in research projects. Collaboration within the institute should be improved in order to change the situation.
- 10) Staff mobility is quite low. The institute should be more active in this regard, support the teaching staff in going on exchanges and developing their English language skills, as well as cooperate more closely with other higher education institutions.
- 11) The high dropout rate among students is partially due to a lack of prior awareness of the study programme and the career opportunities. In order to reduce the dropout rates, an early warning system should be adopted, and upper secondary school students should get clearer information about study programmes.
10. Point 41 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', establishes that the Quality Assessment Council shall approve an assessment report within three months after receipt of the report. The Council shall weigh the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations pointed out in the assessment report, and then shall decide whether to conduct the next quality assessment of that study programme group in seven, five or three years.
11. The Council weighed the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations referred to in point 9 of this document and found that the study programmes, the teaching conducted under these programmes, and development activities regarding teaching and learning conform to the requirements, and, on the basis of point 41.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education',

#### **DECIDED**

**to approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Business and Administration study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the Estonian University of Life Sciences in seven years.**

The decision was adopted by 9 votes in favour. Against 0.

12. The Bureau of EKKA will coordinate a date for the next quality assessment of the study programme group with the Estonian University of Life Sciences no later than 12.06.2023.

13. The Council proposes that the Estonian University of Life Sciences will submit an action plan to EKKA with regard to the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the report no later than 12.06.2018.
14. 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 EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding. A judicial challenge to the decision may be submitted within 30 days after its delivery, filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

**Tõnu Meidla**  
**Chair of the Council**

**Hillar Bauman**  
**Secretary of the Council**