

## Institutional Accreditation Decision Estonian Academy of Security Sciences

**10.06.2019**

**The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of  
the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational  
Education decided**

**to accredit the Estonian Academy of  
Security Sciences  
for seven years**

Acting in accordance with the authorisation granted by the clause 21 (3) 1) of the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act and clause 10 (4) of the Universities Act and section 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) and based on section 43.2 of the 'Guide to Institutional Accreditation' compiled on the basis of the authorisation given in section 3.7.1 of the Statutes of EKKA, the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education (hereinafter, 'the Council') shall state the following:

1. The Estonian Academy of Security Sciences and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct institutional accreditation on 4.01.2018.
2. The following study programme was also assessed in the framework of the institutional accreditation according to point 8 of the 'Guide to Institutional Accreditation':

Police service (professional higher education)

3. The Director of EKKA approved by her order No 1-19/2/2019 the composition of the institutional accreditation committee (hereinafter 'the Committee') for the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences.

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Robin Bryant (Chair)</b> | Professor, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK  |
| <b>Kimmo Himberg</b>        | Rector, Police University College, Finland  |
| <b>Sergiu Vasile</b>        | Professor, Dean, Alexandru Ioan Cuza Police Academy, Romania                              |
| <b>Mark Frederiks</b>       | Coordinator International Policy, NVAO, Holland   |
| <b>Merle Tikk</b>           | Deputy Director-General of the Emergency Response Centre, Estonia                         |
| <b>Matthew Kitching</b>     | Student, Edinburgh Business School, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, ESU student expert |

4. Estonian Academy of Security Sciences submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 11.01.2019, and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 14.01.2019.

5. An assessment visit to the Academy took place on 12 and 13.03.2019.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 26.04.2019, and EKKA forwarded it to the Academy for its comments on 14.05.2019, and the Academy delivered its response on 28.05.2019.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 4.06.2019. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision. The report is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee’s final assessment report along with the Academy’s self-evaluation report to the Council members on 5.06.2019.
9. The component assessments by the Committee were as follows:

| Standard   | Assessment                         | Worthy of recognition |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <a href="#">Strategic management</a>                                  | Conforms to requirements           |                       |
| 2. <a href="#">Resources</a>   | Conforms to requirements           | X                     |
| 3. <a href="#">Quality Culture</a>                                       | Conforms to requirements           |                       |
| 4. <a href="#">Academic ethics</a>                                       | Conforms to requirements           |                       |
| 5. <a href="#">Internationalisation</a>                                  | Partially conforms to requirements |                       |
| 6. <a href="#">The teaching staff</a>                                    | Conforms to requirements           |                       |
| 7. <a href="#">Study programme</a>                                       | Conforms to requirements           | X                     |
| 8. <a href="#">Learning and teaching</a>                                 | Conforms to requirements           |                       |
| 9. <a href="#">Student assessment</a>                                    | Conforms to requirements           |                       |
| 10. <a href="#">Learning support systems</a>                             | Conforms to requirements           |                       |
| 11. <a href="#">Research, development and/or other creative activity</a> | Conforms to requirements           |                       |
| 12. <a href="#">Service to society</a>                                   | Conforms to requirements           |                       |

10. The Council with 9 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 10.06.2019 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences.

## 10.1. Strategic management

### Strengths

1. Academy is very professionally managed; its activity is dynamic and determined; the staff is highly motivated and devoted.
2. The Academy has active multi-level cooperation with state authorities and bodies.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. Cooperation could be improved both within and between Colleges; Colleges' current activities have weak links with the Academy as a whole.
2. Although research is defined in the development plan as one of the key areas for the Academy, its role in the daily work and links to teaching and learning seem to remain somewhat weak. More emphasis shall be put on research.

## 10.2. Resources

### Strengths

1. There is good cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and other stakeholders in planning and implementing of human and financial resources and sustainable development of infrastructure while being innovative and open to the application of new technologies.
2. The Academy has a new main building in Tallinn, designed by the Academy itself to meet the needs of an HEI and providing an excellent environment for teaching and learning.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. Intranet and other innovative IT solutions shall be put into better use to encourage cooperation and information sharing between the Academy and its units.
2. Objectives set for external communication and measuring its success could be developed beyond attracting new students.
3. In light of the Academy's key role in the field of internal security, the number of academic staff currently holding an academic degree is relatively small. More staff with a PhD should be hired, and current members of staff should be encouraged to pursue a doctoral degree.

## 10.3. Quality Culture

### Strengths

1. The Academy's internal assessment system covers all relevant aspects, and the assessment results are used for developing study programmes and making other improvements.
2. Both internal and external stakeholders are widely engaged in conducting internal assessments.
3. Internal assessment is integrated into the management processes through monitoring performance indicators and annual review of action plans.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. Quality indicators used for internal assessment should be expanded, so they would not only rely on satisfaction surveys.
2. Annual reports should be published to inform the general public about the work of the Academy and the changes made as a result of the internal assessments.

3. A well-structured evaluation and feedback system should also be applied at the master's level.
4. The study programmes should be compared with partner institutions for reviewing performance indicators for a more thorough comparative analysis, especially in view of the Academy's ambition to be the best centre of internal security education in Europe by 2025.

#### **10.4. Academic ethics**

##### **Strengths**

1. Students and staff are aware of how important it is that Estonian public servants are reliable and behave ethically.
2. Identified cases of plagiarism or other academic misconduct are handled effectively and aptly.

##### **Areas for improvement and recommendations**

1. The recently launched system for detecting plagiarism and the importance of academic ethics should be introduced more widely to the teaching staff as well as students. It shall be ensured that all staff are familiar with the principles of academic ethics policy that the Academy follows and that it is applied consistently.
2. It is also advisable to use alternative software for plagiarism detection to ensure wider checks of student papers in several languages (e.g. for detecting Google translated originals).

#### **10.5. Internationalisation**

##### **Strengths**

1. The Academy has set an ambitious goal of becoming the best centre in its field in Europe and keeps a close eye on the progress made in achieving the five performance indicators of internationalisation.
2. The Academy has formed a wide international network, including their Colleges, in the work of relevant associations and bodies.
3. Various measures have been implemented or planned for increasing student mobility and integrating international students, such as bursaries for students taking up international mobility, tutors of international students, mixed groups and 'language cafés'.

##### **Areas for improvement and recommendations**

1. The Academy has an ambitious goal of becoming the leading educational institution of their field in Europe; however, it is unclear how it should be materialised and which international references are used for assessing whether this goal is achieved. The assessment committee finds that the target values of performance indicators are not set at a particularly ambitious level, nor are they overly justified. Performance indicators for internationalisation shall be well-argued and international references should be used. An international strategic partnership policy should be developed, keeping in mind the Academy's vision of becoming the leader in its field in Europe.
2. An important objective for the Academy is to offer a multicultural learning environment. However, it is unclear how it should be achieved, considering that the number of international students and teaching staff is small, there is a language barrier and only a few subject courses are available in English. The Academy should make more efforts to encourage international mobility and create opportunities for 'domestic'

internationalisation (which should form an obligatory component of study programmes). Being multicultural is unexceptionally seen as a pedagogical issue, while it should be viewed more widely, for example, from the aspects of cultural and religion-related needs of the students.

3. In 2017/18, the share of students who had participated in long-term international mobility was only 0.6 %. A major barrier for advanced mobility in either direction is the lack of knowledge of English and a small number of courses taught in English. There should be more subject courses available in English and not only elective courses, but also compulsory subjects should be offered in English, where possible. The Academy should consider introducing mobility windows to study programmes. Language learning of both staff and students shall be supported.

## 10.6. Teaching staff

### Strengths

1. The academic staff of the Academy has very efficient cooperation with all stakeholders and representatives of the operational field. Improving teaching and learning is mutually supported through sharing experiences, best practices, human and logistic resources.
2. Practitioners of the field are engaged in teaching, ensuring that the studies cover modern-day challenges.
3. Professional development and evaluation of the academic staff are thorough and systematic, supporting further development of teaching methods, research opportunities and study programmes.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. Only five members of the teaching staff held a PhD in 2018. There should be a greater number of academic staff with a PhD, and their RDC activities should be promoted.
2. There should be tighter cooperation between the Institutes and Colleges of the Academy, not only in terms of study programmes but also in RDC activities.

## 10.7. Study programme

### Strengths

1. Study programmes comply with the Estonian and European requirements. Key stakeholders and the heads/representatives of the responsible chairs participate equally in the decision-making concerning the study programme.
2. The Academy conducts surveys among the alumni and other stakeholders and several areas for improvement have been identified based on the results. Module-based study programmes and other measures have been implemented to improve the level of teaching (especially to better link and balance theory and practice, integrate general competences with the teaching and learning in the area of specialisation).
3. To avoid overlapping within areas of specialisation, the Academy has implemented joint studies across study programmes, practical work and joint field exercises.
4. The Academy prepared an integrated education model of internal security and a relevant action plan to respond to the falling demographic trend.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. Students should be more involved in developing study programmes.

2. Communication and cooperation related to delivering module-based study programmes should be strengthened between Colleges.

## **10.8. Learning and teaching**

### **Strengths**

1. In the framework of a newly built and very impressive infrastructure, the Academy has created a high-quality and quickly developing digital environment that supports efficient teaching and learning.
2. A student-centred approach to teaching that contributes to motivated, well-educated students for whom there is a high demand for on the labour market.
3. Increased opportunities for joint teaching and learning at the study programmes of professional higher education (police, correction, rescue).
4. Graduates are well-prepared and meet the needs of both the employers and the Estonian society.
5. The teaching staff is motivated and qualified.

### **Areas for improvement and recommendations**

1. Student recruitment strategy should be reviewed to broaden the circle of potential student candidates, especially those of older age.
2. To ensure that students are aware of the benefits of writing the thesis and using this for encouraging continuing in higher-level education and research. Popularise the writing of a thesis in the police service study programme.
3. To review the study programmes to make them better meet the needs of 'unconventional' students (such as parents).

## **10.9. Student assessment**

### **Strengths**

1. The student evaluation system is well balanced, coherent, and fair.

### **Areas for improvement and recommendations**

1. More training on evaluation and teaching methods should be provided to visiting teaching staff.

## **10.10. Learning support systems**

### **Strengths**

1. Learning support systems (including academic, psychological and career counselling) are well developed and widely used.

### **Areas for improvement and recommendations**

1. Continuous testing should be used for identifying hidden learning difficulties of students. More extensive knowledge about learning opportunities for students with learning difficulties should be provided to the staff of the Academy.

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

### Strengths

1. Top management of the Academy is devoted to research development.
2. The Academy publishes a high-quality research journal 'Working Papers of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences', which is available for the general public and carries both professional and academic relevance.
3. The Academy substantially contributes to creating new learning materials (such as textbooks in the fields of specialisation).

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. The number of research projects conducted at the Academy is small. The research culture needs further deepening and the main focus of research should go beyond preparing learning materials.
2. Academic staff should be encouraged to pursue doctoral studies.

## 10.12. Service to society

### Strengths

1. There is a systematic, elaborate and targeted cooperation with various stakeholders in the field of internal security, and it is of significant service to society.
2. Academy's new main building is modern (e.g. library, gyms) and offers new opportunities not only for students and teaching staff but also partners, alumni, and the general public.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. To contribute more widely to educating the general public in Estonia about internal security (e.g. coping in a crisis), raising awareness, and improving skills and thus reducing their risk behaviour.
2. Alumni as the best experts and practitioners in the field should be involved more actively and systematically in the development of the Academy (conducting teaching, developing study programmes, organising traineeships).

11. If one to four component assessments are provided as 'partially conforms' and all the remaining component assessments are provided as 'conforms', the Council shall analyse the strengths and areas for improvement of the HEI and conclude that the management, administration, teaching and research activities, as well as the environments of learning and research at the HEI, meet the requirements, and decide to accredit the HEI for seven years; or shall conclude that there are shortcomings in the management, administration, teaching and research activities or in the environments of learning and research at the HEI, provide guidance for their elimination, and decide to accredit the HEI for three years.

12. The Council analysed the strengths and areas for improvement of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences and considering that:

- For two of the standards (resources and study programmes), the Committee finds Academy's achievements to be 'worthy of recognition', and development activities related to internationalisation is one of the priorities for the Academy over the next few years.

### DECIDED

- 1) to accredit the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences for seven years

2) In compliance with the [Statutes of EKKA Quality Label](#) Estonian Academy of Security Sciences is granted EKKA Quality Label.

The decision was adopted by nine votes in favour and 0 against.

13. The accreditation is valid until 10.06.2026. The EKKA Bureau shall agree the time of the next institutional accreditation with Estonian Academy of Security Sciences by 10.06.2025, at the latest.
14. The Council requests Estonian Academy of Security Sciences to submit an overview of the activities concerning the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the decision of the assessment council by 10.06.2021, at the latest.
15. A person who finds that his or her rights have been violated or his or her freedoms 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.
16. The Council shall forward the challenge to its Appeals Committee who shall provide an unbiased opinion in writing regarding the validity of the challenge to the Council, within five days after receipt of the challenge. The Council shall resolve the challenge within ten days of its receipt, taking into account the reasoned opinion of the Appeals Committee. If the challenge needs to be investigated further, the deadline for its review by the Council may be extended by a maximum of thirty days. A legal challenge to this decision is possible within 30 days after its delivery, by filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court under the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

**Tauno Otto**  
Vice Chair of the Council

**Hillar Bauman**  
Secretary of the Council