

Decision on institutional accreditation of Tallinn Health Care College

27.04.2020

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to accredit Tallinn Health Care College for 7 years with a secondary condition.

Pursuant to clause 43.2 of the document "Guide to Institutional Accreditation" established on the basis of the authorization contained in § 38 (3) of the Higher Education Act and clauses 3.7.3 and 3.7.1 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter the Council) states the following:

1. Tallinn Health Care College (TTK) coordinated the time of institutional accreditation with EKKA on 09.01.2019.
2. Based on point 8 of the document "Guide to Institutional Accreditation", the following study programmes were also assessed within the framework of institutional accreditation:

Midwifery (professional higher education)

Pharmacist (professional higher education)

Health promotion (professional higher education)

3. By order 1-19/117/2019 of 15.11.2019, the Director of EKKA approved the institutional accreditation committee (hereinafter committee) in the following composition

Anca Greere (Chairperson)	Professor in English Linguistics and Translation Studies, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (former) Quality Assurance Manager, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, United Kingdom
Einike Pilli	Rector, Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary, Estonia
Jarkko Ketolainen	Professor in Pharmaceutical Technology, and Head of School, School of Pharmacy, University of

	Eastern Finland, Finland
Tiina Freimann	Head Nurse, University of Tartu Hospital, Estonia
Marjatta Häsänen	Senior Lecturer, Health and Wellbeing, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland
Ruud Heijnen	Coordinator for international cooperation for the faculty of health; Program coordinator for the master program Advanced Health Care, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands
Raul Adlas	Chief Physician of Tallinn Emergency Medical Service, Estonia
Laura Koppel	Student, University of Tartu, Estonia

4. TTK submitted the self-analysis report to the EKKA office on 09.09.2019, the EKKA assessment coordinator sent the self-analysis report to the committee on 18.09.2019.
5. The assessment visit at TTK took place on 19.–21.11.2019.
6. The committee sent the draft assessment report to the EKKA office on 07.01.2020, EKKA forwarded the draft assessment report to the higher education institution for comment on 13.01.2020 and TTK submitted its comments on 28.01.2020.
7. The Committee submitted the final assessment report to the EKKA office on 11.02.2020. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision. The report is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Assessment Council forwarded the final assessment report and self-analysis report to the members of the Assessment Council on 09.03.2020.
9. On 12.03.2020, TTK submitted an address to the Council.
10. The assessments of the assessment committee were as follows:

Standard	Assessment	Additional notation
Strategic management	Partially meets the requirements	
Ressursid	Meets the requirements	
Quality culture	Meets the requirements	
Academic ethics	Meets the requirements	
Internationalization	Partially meets the requirements	
Teaching staff	Meets the requirements	
Study programme	Meets the requirements	

Learning and teaching	Meets the requirements	
Assessment of students	Meets the requirements	
Learning support systems	Meets the requirements	
Research, development and/or other creative activities	Partially meets the requirements	
Serving society	Meets the requirements	Worthy of recognition

11. The Council discussed the received documents at the meeting on 27.04.2020 with the participation of 12 members and decided to point out the following strengths of TTK, areas for improvement and recommendations, as well as proposals for further developments.

11.1. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Strengths

1. It is worth highlighting the College's overall approach to the learner, which is well in line with the mission and aims to support and encourage learners to value their work and to act in accordance with their abilities for the benefit of society at large.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. The future vision and strategic goals of the College are not clearly understood by the employees and learners. The College should pay more attention to communicating strategic intentions and implementing them in day-to-day work to ensure that internal stakeholders are informed and make a conscious contribution to achieving the goals. The College should ensure that cross-institutional initiatives are in line with strategic plans, that their benefits and risks are properly assessed, and that the initiative has clear objectives and a positive impact on all stakeholders (learners, the College, society).
2. Rather, the strategic management of the College is characterized by a response to influences from the internal and external environment. Strategic management should be more proactive and systematic, including in identifying and mitigating risks.
3. The ambition of the College's mission and vision to be an innovation-oriented organization that serves society and solves the challenges it faces should also be clearly reflected in action plans and daily work.

11.2. RESOURCES

Strengths

1. College staff are enthusiastic and very committed to both internal and external activities that support learners and society at large.

2. The College has a modern infrastructure, including a simulation center, which supports learning and teaching well.
3. The College has good library resources, which also allow access to many international materials (magazines, books, e-books, etc.).

Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. Supporting the professional development of the employees of the College should be based more on the future vision and strategic goals of the College, rather than on the needs identified by individual employees. The plan should be drawn up at the College level and should be reflected in the College budget.
2. The workload sharing and monitoring system should be better formalized to ensure that employees prioritize their main work over activities aimed at the wider society. This would also allow better monitoring of the workload and avoid staff overload.

Proposals for further developments

1. In terms of development, the College could consider diversifying its sources of income to avoid potential financial risks and ensure the sustainability of modern learning infrastructure.

11.3. QUALITY CULTURE

Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. Comparisons with other institutions of higher education should be clearer, targeted better and more systematic. The reference partners (in Estonia, at the regional and international level) must be chosen so that the comparison is based on the strategic development needs across the College.
2. The understanding of managers and employees at different levels about the role of quality assurance processes in planning the development of the College needs to be harmonized. At present, quality assurance processes are primarily associated with the study programme level.

Proposals for further developments

1. The College could further formalize the collection and sharing of good practices to ensure the recognition and dissemination of good practices within the College.

11.4. ACADEMIC ETHICS

Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. Learners and lecturers do not have a common understanding of plagiarism and its consequences. The code of academic ethics needs to be further developed and better communicated.

Proposals for further developments

1. Learners should be formally informed of restrictions on copyright and copying to raise their awareness and encourage respective behavior.

11.5. INTERNATIONALIZATION

Strengths

1. The College participates in several international networks and consortia.
2. The College offers a good introductory and mentoring program for international students.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. The goals related to internationalization need to be formulated more clearly and communicated to the staff through various communication channels, in order to ensure a common understanding of the College's vision related to internationalization and its implementation.
2. The College should expand the scope of internationalization-related activities and ensure that these activities provide targeted support for the quality of study programmes and the development of professional skills for graduates.
3. There is a need to critically review the number of Erasmus+ partners and, instead of increasing their number, to work on deepening cooperation (e.g., development of common modules/topics, comparison of study programmes, etc.) to support research and study programme implementation.
4. Internationalization initiatives (e.g., the opening of an English-language study programme) must be linked to an internationalization strategy. Impact and risk analyses need to be carried out before initiatives are implemented.

Proposals for further developments

1. Considering the Estonian national context and limited opportunities, the College could further encourage employees to start Doctoral studies, including abroad. In this way, they would gain a broader perspective and be more proactive, which in turn would allow them to fulfill their teaching, research, and societal responsibilities more effectively.
2. It is necessary to plan additional activities that would support internationalization at home, so that lecturers and learners who, for various reasons, do not participate in international mobility can participate in the international way of thinking.

11.6. TEACHING STAFF

Strengths

1. Lecturers' approach to learning and teaching is learner-centered and highly valued by learners.
2. An effective mentoring system for new employees deserves emphasis.

Proposals for further developments

1. The development of the research, development and creative activities of the College would benefit if the College encouraged all lecturers to commence Doctoral studies.

11.7. STUDY PROGRAMME

Strengths

1. The study programmes of the College are clearly in line with the needs of society. Theory and practice are integrated in the study programmes.
2. The internship is meaningful and effective, enabling learners to get acquainted with the work environment and better achieve learning outcomes.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. The College should increase the number and volume of electives offered in both higher and vocational education to support the professional competencies of graduates and the development of skills and attitudes necessary for work.
2. The reflection of critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, interdisciplinary and intercultural communication skills, and entrepreneurship in study programmes should be clearer to give them an important weight in the implementation of the study programme.

11.8. LEARNING AND TEACHING

Strengths

1. The College uses a wide range of different teaching methods and technologies, including relevant simulations.
2. The College provides training for internship supervisors and works closely with them to ensure the conformity of the learning outcomes of internships and study programmes.

Proposals for further developments

1. To increase the quality of the internship, the College could strengthen the system of mutual monitoring and evaluation, where learners inform each other about their progress, problems, and questions during the internship.

11.9. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. In order to increase the reliability and objectivity of assessment results, the College should consider setting up a system for moderating assessment results for all forms of assessment (e.g., second assessor, random sample, external examiner, etc.).

Proposals for further developments

1. The aim of the College should be to create a comprehensive system of assessment of modules in the future, which would not fragment learning outcomes into different parts of the module and assessment methods.

11.10. LEARNING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Strengths

1. The College offers adequate and consistent support to learners in all study places.
2. Student tutors play an important and useful role in the support services provided by the College.

Proposals for further developments

1. It could be useful to specify the role of lecturers in the initial counseling of a student, if the student turns to the lecturer with a problem, the solution of which is not within the competence of the lecturer.
2. Tutors could be provided with more in-depth guidance, such as written instructions for dealing with problems in a more consistent, relevant, and expeditious manner.

11.11. RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND/OR OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Strengths

1. The College enables students to actively participate in applied research and projects.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

1. The College does not have an overall research strategy that would direct research and development activities at the study programme level as well. At present, the research topics arise from the individual interests and preferences of the academic staff and do not always correspond to the strategic goals of the College. The College should develop a strategy that would guide initiatives at different levels in the field of research and development and enable the adoption of funding decisions for RDC activities in line with the cross-institutional objectives.
2. There is a need to ensure a more efficient use of limited resources to improve the impact and effectiveness of research.
3. The College should consider simplifying the protocol for approving research initiatives and increase the role of RUTA (Working Group on Applied Research and R&D) in guiding R&D.

Proposals for further developments

1. The College could use the research results more in its teaching, so that students have an immediate opportunity to take part in research debates.

2. The College can benefit from hiring a research and applied research (funding) coordinator and involving external, experienced researchers in RUTA, thus giving RUTA a stronger role in the management and approval of research and applied research.

11.12. SERVING SOCIETY

Strengths/ ★ Worthy of recognition

1. The College deserves recognition for its extensive and influential activities in Estonian society.
2. The learners of the College are involved in community-based health promotion initiatives that make the College visible in society and raise its profile and status.
3. The College has a newly renovated and modern environment. The simulation center offers good opportunities (often free of charge) not only for learners and lecturers, but also for partners, alumni, and the public.

Proposals for further developments

1. The College could increase the provision of in-service training, especially the provision of so-called refresher training for graduates of vocational education study programmes.

12.If one to four partial assessment are rated "partially compliant" and the remaining partial assessments are rated "compliant", the Assessment Council analyzes the College's strengths and areas for improvement and assesses that the College's management, work organization, teaching and research activities and teaching and research environment meet the requirements and makes the decision to accredit the institution of higher education for seven years or provides an assessment according to which there are deficiencies in the management, work organization, teaching and research activities or study and research environment of the institution of higher education, provides instructions for their elimination and decides to accredit the institution of higher education for three years.

13.The Council analyzed the strengths and areas for improvement of Tallinn Health Care College and considered it necessary to highlight the following:

13.1. The College's extensive and effective activities in Estonian society in the field of health promotion **deserve recognition**.

13.2. **The College is characterized by a number of important strengths:** conducting studies in the regions and successfully implementing apprenticeships; a learner-centered approach as a cross-cutting principle in all areas; clear relevance of study programmes to the needs of society; coherence of theory and practice; meaningful and effective internship; close cooperation with and training of internship supervisors; enthusiastic and dedicated staff; an effective mentoring system for new employees; the role of student tutors in the support

services provided by the College; student participation in applied research and projects.

13.3. **The shortcomings in** meeting the standards for institutional accreditation are mainly related to the three standards that were assessed by the Assessment Committee as "partially meets the requirements": strategic management, internationalization and research, development and/or other creative activities:

- **Strategic management:** Rather, the strategic management of the College is characterized by a response to influences from the internal and external environment. The future vision and strategic goals of the College are not clearly understood by the employees and learners. Cross-college initiatives are not always in line with strategic plans, their benefits and risks, and the impact on stakeholders (learners, the College, society) are not assessed. Unlike the learner-centered approach, the ambition of the mission and vision to be an innovation-oriented organization that solves the problems faced by the society is not sufficiently reflected in all areas of the College's activities.
- **Internationalization:** The College participates in several international networks and offers good support to international students, but the goals related to internationalization are not clearly formulated and the College does not have a common understanding of the vision related to internationalization and its implementation. Therefore, initiatives in the field of internationalization are not always linked to the strategic goals of the College.
- **Research, development and/or other creative activities:** The College does not have an overall research strategy that would direct research and development activities at the study programme level as well. At present, the research topics arise from the individual interests and preferences of the academic staff and do not always correspond to the strategic goals of the College. The management and support system in the field of research and development needs to be strengthened.

14. Pursuant to § 53 (1) 2) of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), a secondary condition to an administrative act is an additional obligation related to the basic regulation of the administrative act and pursuant to clause 3 also an additional condition for the right arising from the basic regulation of the administrative act. § 53 (2) 2) and 3) of the APA provide that a secondary condition may be imposed on an administrative act: if the administrative act cannot be issued without the secondary condition or if the issue of the administrative act must be decided on the basis of administrative right of discretion.

15. Considering the strengths and weaknesses mentioned in clause 13 and relying on clause 43.7 of the document "Guide to Institutional Accreditation", the Council considered that upon fulfillment of certain conditions by the College, a more positive decision can be made if a secondary condition is attached.

In view of the above, the Council

DECIDED

To accredit Tallinn Health Care College for 7 years with the following secondary condition:

Tallinn Health Care College will submit a report in English by 27.02.2023 on the elimination of the deficiencies specified in clause 13.3 of the decision. Members of the Committee shall be involved in the assessment of compliance with the secondary condition.

The decision was adopted by 12 votes in favor. None opposed.

16. Accreditation is valid until 27.04.2027. The next time of the institutional accreditation will be coordinated by the EKKA office with Tallinn Health Care College no later than 27.04.2026.
17. The Council proposes to the Tallinn Health Care College, together with the report on the fulfillment of the secondary condition, no later than 27.02.2023 to submit an overview of the activities of the College also regarding the consideration of other areas for improvement and recommendations set out in the decision of the Council.
18. A person who considers that the decision has violated his or her rights or restricted his or her freedoms may file a challenge with the Assessment Council of EKKA within 30 days after the appellant became aware of or should have become aware of the contested act. The Assessment Council shall send the challenge to the challenge committee of the Assessment Council of EKKA, which shall submit a written, impartial opinion to the Assessment Council on the reasoning of the challenge within 5 days of receipt of the challenge. The Assessment Council shall resolve the challenge within 10 days of receipt, taking into account the reasoned position of the appeal committee. If the challenge needs to be further investigated, the Assessment Council may extend the term for reviewing the challenge by up to 30 days. Contestation of a decision in court is possible within 30 days as of its service by submitting an appeal to the Tallinn Courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

Eve Eisenschmidt
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council