

**Decision Regarding the Assessments of the  
Health Care study programme group  
Tartu Health Care College**

**11/11/2016**

**The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET decided to approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Health Care study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at Tartu Health Care College in seven years**

On the basis of subsection 21<sup>1</sup> (2) of the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act, point 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA') and point 41 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', authorised in point 3.7.1 of the above-mentioned EKKA Statutes; the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of EKKA (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 21.04.2015 Tartu Health Care College 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 20.02.2016, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Health Care study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at Tartu Health Care College, Tallinn Health Care College and the University of Tartu; and the Medicine study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at Tallinn Health Care College (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

<b>Carol Lynn Cox (Chair)</b>	Professor Emeritus, School of Health Sciences, City University, London, United Kingdom; Chief Nurse and Clinical Manager of the Health and Hope Clinics, Pensacola, Florida, USA
<b>Pia Ahonen</b>	Head of Education and Research, Faculty of Health and Wellbeing, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland
<b>Lars Bohlin</b>	Professor Emeritus, Department of Pharmacognosy, University of Uppsala, Sweden
<b>Lesley Dawson</b>	Freelance Consultant in Healthcare Training and Education,

	United Kingdom
<b>Gunta Krūmiņa</b>	Professor, Head of Department of Optometry and Vision Science, Faculty of Physics and Mathematics, University of Latvia, Latvia
<b>Ewen McColl</b>	Director of Clinical Dentistry, Peninsula Dental School, Plymouth University, United Kingdom
<b>Hannele Turunen</b>	Professor, Head of Department of Nursing Science, University of Eastern Finland, Finland
<b>Margus Viigimaa</b>	Professor, Director of the Institute of Cardiovascular Medicine, Tallinn University of Technology; Head of the Centre of Cardiology, North Estonia Medical Centre, Estonia
<b>Samin Sedghi Zadeh</b>	Student; Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Turin, Italy

- Under the Health Care study programme group, Tartu Health Care College submitted the following professional higher education programmes for evaluation:

**Basic Nursing Education**  
**Specialised Nursing Education**  
**Midwife**  
**Biomedical Laboratory Science**  
**Environmental Health Specialist**  
**Radiography**  
**Physiotherapy**

- Tartu Health Care College submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 16.02.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 25.02.2016Tartu.
- An assessment visit was made to Tartu Health Care College during 20–21.04.2016.
- The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 28.06.2016, EKKA forwarded it to Tartu Health Care College for its comments on 9.07.2016 and the College delivered its response on 29.08.2016.
- The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 14.09.2016. That assessment report is an integral part of the decision, and is available on the EKKA website.
- The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee's final assessment report along with the College's self-evaluation report to the Council members on 20.10.2016.
- The Council with 12 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 11.11.2016 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Health Care study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at Tartu Health Care College.

### **Assessment at the Level of the Study Programme Group**

### Strengths

- 1) The teaching and learning environment is very modern and attractive.
- 2) Simulation equipment and well-equipped laboratories offer excellent opportunities to develop practical skills.
- 3) Teaching and learning materials are of excellent quality, and the library offers a wide selection of modern textbooks and research literature.
- 4) Implementation of the programmes is supported by international cooperation in research. Results of research have been published in high-quality international and Estonian journals. Students are included in research of the teaching staff.
- 5) Student counselling is effective.
- 6) Cooperation partners are satisfied with the content of the study programmes and the competence of graduates.
- 7) Very good internship placements with appropriate systems of supervision are guaranteed for students in all of these programmes.
- 8) Good quality IT solutions support the teaching and learning process (SIS, Moodle, free access to electronic databases).

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) For the sake of equal treatment of students and to provide them with high-quality feedback about their academic and clinical progress, external examiners should be involved in the student assessment process.
- 2) The existing laboratories should be used for in-service trainings and applied research to a greater extent.
- 3) It is advisable to develop a system for staff recognition and then to implement it.
- 4) The study programmes should be reviewed and overlaps between courses reduced.
- 5) More attention should be given to replenishing teaching staff from among young prospects. The current promotion system should be reviewed and clearer career paths for the teaching staff created.
- 6) It must be ensured that the distribution of workloads among the teaching staff allows each of them to devote sufficient time to pursue their PhDs and to do research. There should be more staff with PhDs.
- 7) Given the needs of the Estonian labour market, the possibility of increasing the number of graduates from these higher education programmes should be investigated.
- 8) A larger number of international lecturers should be included in the teaching.
- 9) Due to the current structure of the study programmes, students find it difficult to participate in international mobility. The programmes should be modified so that their structure facilitates international student mobility and helps to increase the number of students participating in mobility.
- 10) Students should receive better explanations of the electronic feedback system and the importance of providing feedback.

## **Assessment at the Study Programme Level**

### **BASIC NURSING EDUCATION; SPECIALISED NURSING EDUCATION**

#### Strengths

- 1) Employers judge that students' practical skills meet the requirements of a real working environment in all respects.
- 2) Teaching staff utilise modern teaching methods and learning aids. Students consider the staff's teaching skills to be very good.

- 3) Teaching staff are engaged in professional self-development and in improvement of their qualifications for teaching.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The teaching staff should be engaged in clinical practice for longer terms in order to, inter alia, better assess the professional practical skills to be acquired by students.
- 2) To ensure that all students are able to use learning aids needed to acquire practical skills, it is advisable to reduce the numbers of students in study groups.
- 3) It is advisable to check out simulation laboratories in Estonia and abroad and use the knowledge obtained to develop new simulation facilities. It should be ensured that all staff members who conduct simulation trainings are familiar with the relevant laboratory equipment.
- 4) Module timetables should be reviewed so that dates for submitting course papers and taking examinations are not overlapping.
- 5) Problem-based learning should be used in teaching.
- 6) It should be promoted that the teaching staff be published in internationally recognised journals.
- 7) Students should be involved in the research and development activities of the College.
- 8) In cooperation with partners the use of NANDA (North American Nursing Diagnosis Association) terminology should be considered.

### **PHYSIOTHERAPY**

#### Strengths

- 1) Study programme development is supported by applied research and good cooperation with partners in Estonia and elsewhere in Europe (e.g. European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education).
- 2) In addition to members of the teaching staff, thesis defence committees include employers and representatives from professional associations.
- 3) Teaching is student-centred; problem-based learning is used. The teaching staff are committed and provide students with overall support.
- 4) The programme manager and teaching staff systematically analyse and develop methods used in the teaching and learning process.
- 5) Teaching staff produce international-level publications.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The theoretical part of the study programme should be more closely associated with its practical application in neurology and neurological physiotherapy.
- 2) Longer-term financial plans should be developed to replace speciality-related equipment.
- 3) Applied research should be better integrated into the teaching and learning process.
- 4) More attention should be given to preparing students to cope with difficult situations in clinical practice.
- 5) Reasons for students dropping out should be identified.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST**

#### Strengths

- 1) Study programme development is supported by applied research and good cooperation with employers and other partners.
- 2) Teaching is student-centred; problem-based learning is used. The teaching staff are committed and provide students with overall support.

- 3) The programme manager and teaching staff systematically analyse and develop methods used in the teaching and learning process.
- 4) There is effective integration with the Physiotherapy programme.
- 5) A number of staff members are engaged in research and have published high-quality research articles together with researchers from the University of Tartu.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The proportion of practical training in this study programme is small compared to other programmes at the College, and it should be increased.
- 2) Development of students' communicative skills should be given more attention in the programme and group work should be used to a greater extent.
- 3) Applied research should be better integrated into the teaching and learning process.
- 4) Students with families should be provided with needs-based support.
- 5) During the admission process, the motivations of applicants should be clearly identified, and thereby reduce the dropout rates.

### **MIDWIFE**

#### Strengths

- 1) The study programme has been developed in collaboration with employers, the Estonian Midwives Association, academics from other countries, alumni and students.
- 2) Theory and practice are well integrated in the programme. The organisation of studies is flexible.
- 3) The teaching and learning environment creates favourable conditions for independent learning, preclinical learning and group work.
- 4) A variety of innovative methods are utilised in the teaching process. The teaching staff participate in in-service trainings.
- 5) A mentorship system is in place for newly appointed members of the teaching staff.
- 6) The support system for students is flexible and meets their needs.
- 7) All teaching staff involved in teaching the speciality are involved in clinical practice.
- 8) Research and development projects are integrated with the teaching and learning process and involve students.
- 9) Both the employers and alumni are satisfied with the study programme and students' fitness for placements and employment.
- 10) There is close collaboration with the teaching staff of nursing programmes.
- 11) An internal assessment system of teaching staff has been established. The assessment takes into account the quality of teaching activities as well as research and development work. Students are pleased with teaching staff and the teaching and learning process in general.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) In collaboration with the University of Tartu and Tallinn Health Care College, it is advisable to develop an MSc programme in midwifery that would provide qualifications in midwifery, nursing and health promotion upon completion.
- 2) It is also advisable to develop dual specialisations, such as midwife and physiotherapist or midwife and social worker.
- 3) The results of applied research implemented at the College should be published in international scientific journals.
- 4) Students should be more involved in research and development projects.
- 5) Some laboratory equipment is becoming obsolete and needs to be replaced.

## **BIOMEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE**

### Strengths

- 1) While developing the study programme, the requirements by the European Association for Professions in Biomedical Laboratory Science as well as proposals by all partners are taken into account. Employers are involved in the work of the programme council and in the supervision of theses.
- 2) Training of clinical supervisors and the supervisors of international students is well organised.
- 3) Teaching staff are enthusiastic and use student-centred teaching and learning methods.
- 4) The teaching staff are engaged in clinical practice and closely communicate with the students' clinical supervisors.
- 5) Students are motivated and, according to employers, well prepared for placements and employment.

### Areas for improvement and recommendation

- 1) The number of students in the study programme should be increased, by applying effective marketing and admission methods. It is advisable to use interviews and language tests during the admissions process.
- 2) A launch of an MSc programme in biomedical laboratory science should be considered in collaboration with the University of Tartu.
- 3) The study programme should include more language learning.
- 4) Laboratory equipment must be updated on a regular basis.
- 5) It is advisable to spread the student workload of examinations and independent work over a longer period.
- 6) Ways to reduce the number of supervisees per supervisor should be sought.
- 7) More attention should be given to the development of communicative and teamwork skills of the students.

## **RADIOGRAPHY**

### Strengths

- 1) While developing the study programme, the requirements of the European Federation of Radiographer Societies are taken into account, and close cooperation with employers, alumni and other partners is observed. The partners are also involved in the work of the programme council and thesis defence committees.
- 2) Collaboration with the Biomedical Laboratory Science programme is effective. These programmes share some modules and there are plans to increase the number of such modules.
- 3) Training of clinical supervisors and the supervisors of international students is well organised.
- 4) Teaching staff are enthusiastic and use student-centred teaching and learning methods.
- 5) The teaching staff are involved in professional practices thereby ensuring that students are provided with up-to-date knowledge and skills.
- 6) Employers believe that students have good practical, teamwork and communicative skills.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) It is necessary to ensure that students have sufficient foreign language proficiency needed to complete the programme.
- 2) It is advisable to use tutors for personal counselling of students.
- 3) Students should be encouraged to provide more feedback about the teaching and learning process, and the anonymity of respondents should be guaranteed.

- 4) A launch of an MSc programme in the same speciality should be considered, in collaboration with other universities.
  - 5) Ways to reduce the number of supervisees per supervisor should be sought.
  - 6) Problem-based learning should be integrated into the teaching and learning process.
  - 7) The student workload of examinations and independent work should be spread over a longer period to reduce students' stress and prevent dropouts.
- 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 years, or in less than seven 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

#### **DECIDED**

**to approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Health Care study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at Tartu Health Care College in seven years.**

The decision was adopted by 12 votes in favour. Against 0.

- 12.** The Bureau of EKKA will coordinate a date for the next quality assessment of this study programme group with Tartu Health Care College no later than 11.02.2023.
- 13.** The Council proposes that Tartu Health Care College will submit an action plan to EKKA with regard to the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the report no later than 11.11.2017.
- 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**