

# Decision on institutional accreditation of Tartu Health Care College

27.04.2020

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to accredit Tartu 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. Tartu Health Care College (TTK) coordinated the time of institutional accreditation with EKKA on 03.01.2019.
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)*

*Environmental Health Specialist (professional higher education)*

*Biomedical Laboratory Science (professional higher education)*

3. By order 1-19/86/2019 of 17.09.2019, the Director of EKKA approved the institutional accreditation committee (hereinafter committee) in the following composition

<b>Joke Denekens</b> (Chairman)	Emeritus Professor, past Vice Rector University of Antwerp, Belgium
<b>Johanna Heikkilä</b>	Senior Advisor at Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Finland
<b>Lies van Gennip</b>	Member board of directors of Albert Schweitzer Hospital. Former CEO/Chair Nictiz, National

	Center for eHealth and Standards. From November 2019 CEO a.i. of PALGA, Dutch nationwide registry for pathology, The Netherlands
<b>Jonathan Loose</b> (Secretary)	Research Associate, School of Advanced Studies, University of London; Institutional Reviewer, UK Quality Assurance Agency; and Research Director, Stewards Company, Ltd., United Kingdom
<b>Barbara Schildberger</b>	Head of Degree Programme in Midwifery; Diversity Manager, University of Applied Sciences for Health Professions in Upper Austria, Austria
<b>Stella Polikarpus</b>	Lecturer, Academy of Internal Affairs, Rescue College, Chair of Crisis Management, Estonia
<b>Julia Lezik</b>	Tartu Ambulance Foundation, Chief of station, ambulance nurse, Estonia
<b>Andra Õismaa</b>	Head of Training and Counseling Center, Nursing Manager, AS Medicum Tervishoiuteenused, Estonia
<b>Rait Bessonov</b>	Student, University of Tartu

4. TTK submitted a self-analysis report to the EKKA office on 12.07.2019, which was sent to the committee by the assessment coordinator on 02.09.2019.
5. The assessment visit at TTK took place on 15.–17.10.2019.
6. The Committee sent the draft assessment report to the EKKA office on 08.12.2019, which EKKA forwarded to the institution of higher education for comment on 17.12.2019 and to which TTK submitted a reply on 14.01.2020.
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. On 03.03.2020, TTK submitted an address to the Council.
9. 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.
10. The partial assessments of the assessment committee were as follows:

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Additional notation</b>
Strategic management	Partially meets the requirements	
Resources	Partially meets the requirements	
Quality culture	Partially meets the requirements	
Academic ethics	Meets the requirements	
Internationalization	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. The College plays a leading role in the development of new study programmes in the field of health care and is actively involved in the development of national professional standards. Local stakeholders are widely involved in the planning of the College and its study programmes.

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

1. Planning the development of the College is not sufficiently targeted and systematic. The Development Plan 2015–2020 of the College rather fulfills the role of an action plan, as it lacks strategic goals that would ensure movement towards the implementation of an ambitious mission and vision. In the new Development Plan of the College, it is important to ensure the coherence of the mission, vision and values and strategic goals, and to define measurable key indicators that would be clearly related to the fulfillment of the strategic goals.

2. In a sense, the College is in a transition phase caused by both internal and external factors: changes in legislation, changes in personnel management, financial challenges, the need to increase the volume and level of research (especially due to the addition of Master's studies). The role of strategic leadership is critical right now. The mission of the College is "to provide competitive, high-quality, innovative, international, development-based and research-based lifelong learning in an inspiring environment in the field of health and social care". At the same time, there are no measurable goals in several areas that are important for the fulfillment of the mission (innovation, research and development, internationalization, quality of learning). To ensure the development of the College in the desired direction, it is necessary to set clear goals and plan activities in such areas as pedagogical innovation, research, and internationalization.

## **11.2. RESOURCES**

### ***Strengths***

1. The infrastructure of the College is of very good quality.

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

1. The management of funds is not sufficiently in line with the development goals of the College. When allocating resources, a model should be introduced that allows resources to be directed to the development of strategically important areas such as research, service to society, internationalization, development of new Master's programmes. The model should define resource allocation criteria that will ensure targeted and sustainable progress in the direction of the mission and the achievement of the vision.
2. In a context of limited financial resources, risk management is critical. In order to mitigate financial risks and ensure sustainability, a risk-based scenario must be established, which takes into account various factors and includes risk mitigation activities. This is necessary so that the reduction of resources does not hinder the strategic development of the College.
3. The development interviews of academic staff should also provide them with a direction to focus on in the coming period – serving society, pedagogical innovation or research and development, as well as the integration of teaching and research.
4. There are insufficient financial resources for the innovative development of study programme (e-health technology and software). There is a need to manage study programmes and already limited resources more efficiently to ensure future capacity for innovation in all teaching activities.

### **11.3. QUALITY CULTURE**

#### ***Strengths***

1. The Quality Manual is a good tool for developing a quality culture.
2. The results of the satisfaction surveys show that the satisfaction of employees, students and stakeholders is high.

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

1. The EFQM model has been used in the quality management of the College since 2003, but its implementation in the College as a whole is not sufficiently systematic. It is advisable to take responsibility at management level for the quality development process as a whole and to put in place tools to monitor and guide developments in this area. Tools should include, for example, SWOT analyzes (or other similar model) that allow the current situation of strategic objectives to be assessed at different levels, structural units, study programmes, support systems, etc.
2. The Quality Manual as an instrument of operational management should be more in line with reality. The processes and division of responsibilities described in it must be implemented throughout the College.
3. The results of satisfaction surveys are not systematically communicated to learners. Learners need to be informed about the actions taken based on their feedback.

### **11.4. ACADEMIC ETHICS**

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

1. The assessment committee recommends that the College check all graduation theses for plagiarism. Graduation theses need special attention because they play a major role in assessing student performance. Therefore, the checking only a certain sample is also insufficient. Checking all graduation theses, as opposed to just checking the sample, also ensures that plagiarism detection software (e.g., Urkund) receives more material from which plagiarism can be detected. This is especially important in the case of theses written in Estonian, as there are few tools that would allow to identify plagiarism written in Estonian. The same approach could be applied to works submitted in Moodle (homework, projects, essays). However, if the College decides to continue with the current, sample-based approach, this choice must be justified, and a system established that determines the sample size and selection criteria. The College must also ensure that it uses these criteria systematically.
2. The College must ensure that documentation and training pertaining to ethics (both academic and professional) are up-to-date and take account of new technological developments. Documents governing learning and teaching should be reviewed in the light of new developments and include explanations of how and when new technologies (eg smartwatches, social media) can be used without violating the principles of academic ethics.

### ***Proposals for further developments***

1. Students should be encouraged to turn to a student advisor in cases where the problem cannot be resolved at the level of the staff member involved. The student council should also review its role here and actively participate in solving students' problems as a student representative.
2. Principles of ethics should also be available in English to support internationalization.

## **11.5. INTERNATIONALIZATION**

### ***Strengths***

1. The College is significantly involved in internationalization, which benefits both the staff and students in the College. According to employers, internationalization supports the flexibility and performance of College graduates in the Estonian health care system.

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

1. The College's approach to internationalization should be more strategic. The goal of cross-College internationalization should be clearly articulated, and the various activities aimed at internationalization should be brought under a common umbrella. The College, together with health care providers, should think about how to increase the number of foreign students who would stay in Estonia and work in the Estonian health care system after graduation.

### ***Proposals for further developments***

1. In the next period of strategic planning, the College should set key performance indicators for internationalization that are realistic and, if necessary, adaptable, providing a sufficient challenge.
2. It is important to set up a system for reviewing all foreign institutions of higher/vocational education where students perform their internships. This helps to ensure that students gain experience abroad that also meets the requirements of TTK, and that the learning outcomes achieved abroad correspond to the learning outcomes set out in the TTK study programmes.
3. Attention should be paid to how students whose mobility opportunities are limited due to family or work responsibilities can experience internationalization. It is worth considering shorter study trips and "internationalization at home".
4. It is necessary to ensure that there is an element of internationalization in the learning process for each student. This may mean, for example, that foreign lecturers are constantly teaching in the study programme, as well as offering students an "internationalization menu" from which each student can choose the way/activity in which internationalization enters his or her own studies.

## **11.6. TEACHING STAFF**

### ***Strengths***

1. Both administrative staff and lecturers are committed to ensuring that graduates are well prepared for professional work.

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

1. The share of part-time lecturers in the College is high. It is recommended to increase the share of full-time lecturers in the College. More full-time staff would make study programme development, research and creative work and development of pedagogical skills more efficient.
2. The development of pedagogical skills is not systematic for all study programmes and lecturers. Tools should be put in place to develop and assess staff competences, encourage mutual learning, and help new lecturers to settle in.

### ***Proposals for further developments***

1. Supporting employees to obtain a doctoral degree should be a systematic and integral part of higher education life. This is very important because lecturers with doctoral degree are needed in master's studies, and in research and development throughout the College.
2. The lecturers' foreign language skills (especially English) need to be developed to support international mobility.

## **11.7. STUDY PROGRAMME**

### ***Strengths***

1. Students are well prepared for internship and work.
2. The needs and expectations of the target groups and students have been met through the study programmes and all parties are satisfied with it.

## **11.8. LEARNING AND TEACHING**

### ***Strengths***

1. Throughout the year, potential entrants have had the opportunity to become a student shadow. In 2018, it was used by 117 people.
2. The College offers various short courses for upper secondary schools, which include both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The aim of these courses is to arouse potential learners' interest in health care and medicine.

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

1. The College should have a better overview of the extent and effectiveness of the use of active learning methods.
2. The College should make pedagogical training for hospital clinical instructors compulsory.

## **11.9. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS**

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

1. The College must ensure that the assessment criteria are known to all lecturers and students. The current assessment criteria are too general. Study programmes should explain the relationship between learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment tasks and criteria. All module and output-based study programmes should be reviewed to ensure that assessment methods and criteria are appropriate. As lecturers are free to design assessment tasks that are relevant to their courses, the College must provide training for lecturers to develop their assessment skills and ensure that assessment is based on clearly defined criteria.

### ***Proposals for further developments***

1. The Objectively Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) should be used in most vocational and higher education study programmes. The assessment committee believes that using the OSCE is an effective tool for gathering feedback on learning activities. The OSCE should be set up in such a way that, in addition to professional competencies, general competencies can be assessed.

## **11.10. LEARNING SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

### ***Strengths***

1. The individual approach applied to each student in the College is commendable. The possibility of creating individual study programs is a good way to take into account the special needs of students, and it is also highly valued by the students themselves.

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

1. At present, the College does not offer the opportunity to study for people with disabilities, because many disabilities do not allow people to work in the regulated specialties offered by the College. However, it is also advisable to find opportunities to admit students with disabilities.

### ***Proposals for further developments***

1. Although career counseling is not always necessary to find a job, it is still very important for students to know which job is best for them. Counseling helps the learner to specialize within their field. Therefore, students (including international students) should be systematically offered individual counseling.
2. It is recommended to use entrance interviews at the admission of each specialty to map learners' expectations and motivation at the beginning of their studies. It also reduces the likelihood of dropping out.
3. The Academic Department should be more proactive and focus on identifying learners' problems as early as possible. Early identification of



problems makes it possible to provide learners with proactive help in developing learning skills and other general competences, such as time planning.

### **11.11. RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND/OR OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

#### ***Strengths***

1. The College is successful in publishing and popularizing the research and development activities carried out.
2. The research and development activities of the College have a positive effect on the quality of students' studies.

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

1. According to the self-assessment report, the main directions of the College's research and development activities are the learning process, health and evidence-based development of the profession, but there is no evidence of setting and following R&D priorities, focus and goals. Strategic research and development management and the evaluation of the effectiveness of priority directions are vague. Prioritization of R&D should be clear to both internal and external stakeholders, and it is necessary to set objectives and key results based on the priorities.
2. The current R&D support system is deficient. In the areas set as a priority, it is first and foremost necessary to provide support services to lecturers, which would include the search for funding opportunities and assistance in writing projects both in Estonia and internationally.

#### ***Proposals for further developments***

1. It is recommended to increase the role of the Research and Development Board in the strategic management and decision-making in the field of research and development.

### **11.12. SERVING SOCIETY**

#### ***Strengths/ ★ Worthy of recognition***

1. The College is aware of its role as a health promoter and leader of healthy behavior in society, and in order to fulfill it, many different types of community activities are carried out, in which learners are also involved.

#### ***Proposals for further developments***

1. The College should systematically develop the forms of learning necessary for transformative learning and design learning paths and make the most of its potential.
2. The College's wide-ranging work in society should be used to launch more and more research projects.

12. If one to four partial assessments 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 Tartu Health Care College and considered it necessary to highlight the following:
- 13.1. The activities of the College as a health promoter and leader of healthy behavior in society and the involvement of learners in various types of community activities **deserve recognition**.
- 13.2. **The College is characterized by a number of important strengths:** a leading role in the development of new study programmes and professional standards in the field of health care; the compliance of study programme with the expectations and needs of all stakeholders; successful implementation of on-the-job learning; an individual approach to each learner; high satisfaction of staff, students and stakeholders; dedicated lecturers and administrative staff; effective activities in introducing specialties (student shadow, short courses for upper secondary schools).
- 13.3. **Shortcomings in** meeting the standards for institutional accreditation mainly concern issues related to strategic planning under four standards that were assessed by the assessment committee as "partially meets the requirements": strategic management, resources, quality culture and research, development and/or other creative activities:
- **Strategic management:** Planning the development of the College is not sufficiently targeted and systematic. The Development Plan 2015-2020 of the College rather fulfills the role of an action plan, as it lacks strategic goals that would ensure movement towards the implementation of an ambitious mission and vision. There are no measurable goals in several areas that are important for the fulfillment of the mission (innovation, research and development, internationalization, quality of learning).
  - **Resources:** The management of funds is not sufficiently in line with the development goals of the College. Risk management is deficient.
  - **Quality culture:** The EFQM model has been used in the quality management of the College since 2003, but its implementation in the College as a whole is not systematic and does not support the pursuit of strategic goals of the College at different levels (structural units, study programmes, support systems).

- **Research, development and/or other creative activities:**  
Although the College is successful in popularizing the research and development activities carried out, the strategic management in the field of research and development and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the priority directions is vague. The R&D support system is deficient.

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 Tartu Health Care College for 7 years with the following secondary condition:**

Tartu 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 Tartu Health Care College no later than 27.04.2026.

17. The Council proposes to the Tartu 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**  
**Head of the Council**

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