

**Decision Regarding the Assessment of the  
Psychology Study Programme Group  
University of Tartu**

**13/06/2016**

**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  
Psychology study programme group in the first and second  
cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu  
in seven years**

On the basis of subsections 12<sup>2</sup> (1) and 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 13.04.2015 the University of Tartu 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 23.02.2016, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Psychology study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu and Tallinn University (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

<b>Jonathan James Loose – Chair</b>	Director of Learning and Teaching, Heythrop College, University of London (United Kingdom)
<b>Marcel A.G van Aken</b>	professor, Universiteit Utrecht (Netherlands)
<b>Dalia Nasvytiene</b>	Assistant Professor, Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (Lithuania)
<b>Alessandra Re</b>	Adjunct Professor, Università di Torino (Italy)
<b>Inguna Zarina</b>	Student, European Student Union, University of Latvia (Latvia)
<b>Milvi Tepp</b>	Employer representative, Chairman of the Board of Estonian Human Resource Management Association PARE

	(Estonia)
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3. The University of Tartu submitted the following programmes for evaluation under this study programme group:  
**Psychology (BA)**  
**Psychology (MA)**
4. The University of Tartu submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 2.02.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 10.02.2016.
5. An assessment visit was made to the University of Tartu on 06.04.2016.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 4.05.2016, EKKA forwarded it to the University of Tartu for its comments on 16.05.2016, and the University delivered its response on 30.05.2016.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 1.06.2016. 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 1.06.2016.
9. The Council with 8 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 13.06.2016 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Psychology study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu.

#### **Assessment at the Levels of the Study Programme Group and the Study Programme**

##### Strengths

- The Psychology study programmes at the University of Tartu have a very strong academic background. Most members of the teaching staff are internationally recognised specialists in their fields, allowing students to be a part of high-quality and up-to-date research.
- Students are satisfied and motivated. There is a strong sense of community among both the teaching staff and the students.
- Both the management and development of study programmes are strategic and well organised. Stakeholders, including students, are involved in continuous development of the study programmes. There is a plan to establish a 'development fund' aimed at recruiting top Estonian scientists back to their native land and thus strengthen the local academic community.
- The BA and MA programmes are well integrated and form a coherent whole.
- The prerequisite courses of the MA programme ensure a systematic approach to learning and support the achievement of programme objectives.
- Web-based teaching and learning is used extensively.
- The high-quality infrastructure and resources contribute to the achievement of programme objectives.
- Both students and teaching staff are given excellent administrative support.

- Modern teaching methods and technological resources are used in teaching. Teaching staff are satisfied with the availability of training and are engaged in continuous personal professional development.
- Students are very competitive having won national awards for their research papers and have published results of their research in international journals. Students show good initiative, also participating in projects outside of their studies (e.g. Lahendus, Psychobus).
- There is a good integration into the labour market – approximately 80% of graduates of these programmes are working in fields of their specialities.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- For the sake of their future careers, students should have more opportunities for interdisciplinary study at both the Institute and University levels.
  - It is recommended that the Institute of Psychology promote a partnership with Tallinn University and seek mutually beneficial ways to collaborate. By effectively combining the strengths of these two universities, it could be possible to strengthen the competitiveness of Estonian psychology programmes in the international market as well.
  - It is advisable to reduce the number of courses with low credit ratings which do not allow students to dig deeply enough into the subject matter.
  - Providing a sustainable workplace-based training for a sixth academic year is crucial for preparation of clinical psychologists (including from the perspective of international comparability). It is also advisable to consider applying a sixth academic year to the training regimen of school psychologists.
  - The declining number of students could become a problem for future funding of academic activities. Means of increasing research funding should be sought. It is advisable to teach new MA programmes in English to increase the numbers of international students.
  - Student workloads among courses with the same credit ratings need to be made more uniform.
  - It is advisable to simplify the procedure for transfer of ECTS credits earned at other universities.
  - It is advisable to use a larger number of internationally recognised visiting lecturers for shorter terms.
  - It is advisable, at the first opportunity, to recruit an academic leader for Chair of Clinical Psychology who would help the Institute to establish a clear developmental focus.
  - In the field of School Psychology, additional teaching staff is needed. It is advisable to share resources with Tallinn University.
  - Students should be provided with effective academic guidance while choosing electives. It is important to emphasise to prospective students the research-driven nature of the work of a psychologist.
  - Additional opportunities should be offered to students to work with future employers in joint projects.
  - Efforts to prevent and reduce dropouts should be continued.
- 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 programme, the teaching conducted under this programme, 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 Psychology study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu in seven years.**

The decision was adopted by 8 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 University of Tartu no later than 13.09.2022.
13. The Council proposes that the University of Tartu will submit an action plan to EKKA with regard to the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the report no later than 13.06.2017.
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**