

Assessment Report

# Business and Administration

Estonian Business School

Tallinn University

Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre

2017

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## Introduction

Quality assessment of a study programme group involves the assessment of the conformity of study programmes and the studies and development activities that take place on their basis to legislation, national and international standards and developmental directions with the purpose of providing recommendations to improve the quality of studies.

The goal of quality assessment of a study programme group is supporting the internal evaluation and self-development of the institution of higher education. Quality assessment of study programme groups is not followed by sanctions: expert assessments should be considered recommendations.

Quality assessment of a study programme group takes place at least once every 7 years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education *Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education*.

The task of the assessment team was the evaluation of the Study Programme Group (SPG) of Business and Administration in three universities – Estonian Business School, Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and Tallinn University.

The team was asked to assess the conformity of the study programmes belonging to the study programme group and the instruction provided on the basis thereof to legislation and to national and international standards and/or recommendations, including the assessment of the level of the corresponding theoretical and practical instruction, the research and pedagogical qualification of the teaching staff and research staff, and the sufficiency of resources for the provision of instruction.

The following persons formed the assessment team (AT):

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Tanja Dmitrovic (Chair) | Dr, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics (Slovenia)                     |
| M Abdul Rauf            | Dr, Head, School of Business, Wittenborg University of Applied Sciences(Holland) |
| Jaakko Lehtonen         | Professor Emeritus, University of Jyväskylä (Finland)                            |
| Simone Wesner           | Dr, University of London, Birkbeck (United Kingdom)                              |
| Anne Perkiö             | Lic.Ed, Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Finland)             |
| Kotryna Peilakauskaite  | Student, University of Vilnius (Lithuania)                                       |
| Tõnu Pekk               | Entrepreneur (Estonia)   |

The assessment process was coordinated by Liia Lauri (EKKA).

After the preparation phase, the work of the assessment team in Estonia started on Monday, December 5, 2016, with an introduction to the Higher Education System as well as the assessment procedure by EKKA, the Estonian Quality assurance organization for higher and vocational education. The members of the team agreed on the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group at the three institutions, who were part of the assessment process. The distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment team was organised and the detailed schedule of the site visits agreed upon.

During the following days, meetings were held with the representatives of Estonian Business School (from December 6 to 7), Tallinn University (December 8) and Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (December 9). In all cases, the schedule for discussion on site for each of the various study programmes only allowed for short time slots to be available for team members to exchange information, discuss conclusions and implications for further questions.

On Saturday, December 10, the team held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report, and findings of team meetings were discussed. This work was executed in a cooperative way and the members of the team intensively discussed their individual views on the relevant topics.

Report provides an external and objective perspective on the programmes and the contexts within which they are delivered. The intention is to provide constructive comment and critique which may form the basis upon which improvements in the quality of the programmes may be achieved.

In the next section, general findings, conclusions and recommendations which are relevant across the whole SPG are presented.

## General findings and recommendations

Overall, the assessment team did not find any apparent incongruity with the quality standards set by EKKA, either in the programme set-up or implementation in any of the institutions. Good alignment of views of different stakeholders was observed in all three institutions indicating that standards and implementation policy are disseminated within each institution.

The general findings and recommendations outlined below address different stakeholders of the Estonian Higher education system: the institutions delivering SPG Business Administration programmes under review, as well as relevant governmental bodies, including EKKA.

I. Recommendations for higher education institutions (HEIs) in SPG Business Administration:

1. HEIs should revisit structure of their programmes regarding ECTS allocation. Assessment team found many that stakeholders have no clear understanding of ECTS allocation (which should correlate to student workload) and on how does this feed into curriculum development and overall student experience.
2. HEIs are encouraged to adopt an interdisciplinary approach in their programme development; for example, by including more social and cultural content in their curricula.
3. All visited institutions have issues with assessment feedback loops regarding feedback to students. A systematic approach should be adopted across programmes and courses that would:
  - enable students to receive written qualitative feedback on all component parts of their grade;
  - enhance quality of learning for students;
  - establish a clear paper trail and thereby ensure equal treatment of all students and transparency.
4. Plagiarism detection software KRATT applies only to texts in Estonian language. A programme that checks texts in different languages should be used in all English language programmes. Software solutions which allow authors to check similarity prior to final paper submission (such as Turnitin) encourage students to take responsibility for submitting works that follow copy-right guidelines, as well as facilitates providing qualitative feedback to students by course instructors (see recommendation above).
5. Compulsory student feedback linked to an access to grades and/or progressing to the next semester should be reconsidered, also in view of the exam questions: does it truly provide relevant feedback.
6. In programmes that are delivered in English language, all materials should be in English and must be up-to date.
7. If internationalisation is part of the school's mission and/or vision, the school should enable, promote and encourage outgoing exchange of faculty and students in order to allow them to acquire international exposure and experiences.
8. HEIs are encouraged to revisit their academic staff workload allocation models. All visited schools adopted clearly defined guidelines regarding teaching load, however research load as well as administrative tasks should equally be taken into account.

II. Recommendations regarding further development of Estonian higher education environment:

1. The authorities should look up international (EU) benchmarks how to set-up a national student survey which will increase transparency regarding educational quality. Beside adopting nationwide system of collecting student feedback, the authorities could also create nationwide guidelines

- on how to incorporate feedback into performance appraisals and curriculum development.
2. To facilitate quality improvement in teaching and learning, a national framework for supporting teaching faculty development could be considered (modelled after international benchmarks, e.g., Higher Education Academy in the UK).
  3. Drop-out rates and study interruptions should be addressed not only by the HEIs but also within national higher education framework. Many Estonian students may be disadvantaged in international job markets in comparison to applicants from other HE environments who complete their studies on time, therefore, a concerted effort by HE institutions and authorities to address this issue should be made:
    - Allowing for higher programme flexibility to enable students to reconcile their study obligations and job requirements. Information on study modes and programme delivery provided to students prior to enrolling should be very clear.
    - Consider separating full-time and part-time delivery modes – there should be clear delineation between the two in terms of student admission, contact hours and schedules.
    - More scholarship opportunities (or other support mechanisms such as student loan) would mitigate this problem. Employer association or employers could also be involved to motivate students to complete their studies first before joining careers on fulltime basis. This should be a win-win for both the parties although shortage of skilled labour pool makes it difficult to achieve.
  4. Private higher education institutions seem to be in a disadvantaged position with regard to availability of e-resources (e.g., journal databases). National framework could include provisions which would facilitate equal access for all HEIs (e.g., subsidies for e-resources for private HEIs or inclusion of HEIs in library consortia).

# 1. Assessment report of SPG at Estonian Business School

## 1.1. Introduction

Estonian Business School (EBS) is a free standing private business school owned by EBS Education OÜ, a private limited company set up by AS Estonian Business School Group. It was founded in 1988, when the first steps to restore the country's independence were being taken, in an effort to build a democratic society and open market economy. EBS has institutional accreditation for seven years, granted by the Estonian Higher and Vocational Education Quality Agency (EKKA) in 2013. In June 2016 EBS bachelor programme in International Business Administration was granted EPAS accreditation.

There are 1434 students currently enrolled in EBS: 1018 at bachelor and 416 at master level. EBS offers also a Doctoral degree programme which is not included in this evaluation. International Business Administration Bachelor-level and Master-level programmes are offered also in Helsinki (Finland). Master in Cultural Management is a joint study programme with Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. This programme is evaluated in a separate section of this report

EBS offers following programmes at bachelor and master level in the field of business administration:

- BBA – Bachelor of International Business Administration (offered at Tallinn and Helsinki campus)
- BEB – Bachelor of Entrepreneurship and Business Administration
- BBL – Bachelor of Business Administration and Languages
- MA – Master of International Business Administration (MA) offered at Tallinn and Helsinki campus)
- MBA – Master of International Business Administration (MBA)
- MBAev – Master of Entrepreneurship (MBA)
- MBABI – Master of Business Innovation (MBA)

Statistical data of the study programme group is the following:

| <b>Level</b>          | <b>Academic year</b> | <b>Admission</b> | <b>Graduates</b> | <b>Drop out cases</b> | <b>Students</b> |
|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| BBA                   | 2015/16              | 134              | 95               | 74                    | 554             |
|                       | 2014/15              | 163              | 95               | 82                    |                 |
|                       | 2013/14              | 157              | 49               | 86                    |                 |
| BBA - Helsinki branch | 2015/16              | 54               | 3                | 26                    | 228             |
|                       | 2014/15              | 68               | 32               | 31                    |                 |
|                       | 2013/14              | 65               | 24               | 20                    |                 |

(cont. on the next page)

| Level                | Academic year | Admission | Graduates | Drop out cases | Students |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|----------|
| BEB                  | 2015/16       | 121       | 41        | 59             | 389      |
|                      | 2014/15       | 104       | 48        | 57             |          |
|                      | 2013/14       | 87        | 47        | 60             |          |
| BBL                  | 2015/16       | 14        | 5         | 8              | 71       |
|                      | 2014/15       | 22        | 11        | 11             |          |
|                      | 2013/14       | 17        | 19        | 15             |          |
| MA                   | 2015/16       | 56        | 33        | 43             | 190      |
|                      | 2014/15       | 39        | 28        | 38             |          |
|                      | 2013/14       | 47        | 35        | 47             |          |
| MA - Helsinki branch | 2015/16       | 13        |           |                | 13       |
|                      | 2014/15       | -         |           |                |          |
|                      | 2013/14       | -         |           |                |          |
| MBA                  | 2015/16       | 23        | 21        | 23             | 129      |
|                      | 2014/15       | 29        | 11        | 43             |          |
|                      | 2013/14       | 18        | 22        | 34             |          |
| MBAev                | 2015/16       | 33        | 3         | 6              | 71       |
|                      | 2014/15       | 25        | 0         | 4              |          |
|                      | 2013/14       | 17        | -         | 1              |          |
| MBABI                | 2015/16       | 7         | 9         | 1              | 15       |
|                      | 2014/15       | 9         | -         | 0              |          |
|                      | 2013/14       | -         | -         | 0              |          |

*Source: Self-Assessment Report EBS*

Processes of programme design, evaluation and revision are fully standardised. This has led to high uniformity of programmes in terms of programme structure, delivery modes, staff selection and training, as well as teaching and learning methods. Also, all programmes share the same resources (i.e., physical infrastructure, teaching staff and governance structure).

Therefore, to avoid repetition we provide joint evaluation of all EBS programmes, making distinction only between bachelor and master degree programmes. When relevant, further distinctions between individual study programmes are indicated (e.g., when evaluating Teaching Staff standard).

For each standard, we first outline some general comments, then evaluate specifics of BA programmes and MA programmes, and finally, list the institution's strengths and provide suggestions for improvement.

## 1.2. General findings and recommendations at the study programme group level

EBS has evolved during the past decades into a well-managed business school, with quality assessment and quality improvement procedures in place. Self-Assessment Report (SAR) indicates that the process of continuous improvement



is taken seriously and that the feed-back loops exist. Action plans presented in the SAR (pp. 86-88) also show that EBS is aware of areas of improvement and it is actively working towards addressing current shortcomings (i.e., level and scope of internationalisation, teacher development, developing e-learning environment, increasing the level research component of study programmes, and improving progression and completion rates).

Based on the SAR and interviews with stakeholders during the site visit, a clear DNA of the school emerged: EBS seems to be a niche school which attracts entrepreneurially-minded students. The studies are very practically oriented, which can be in itself an important strength, as it prepares students for requirements of labour market, but at the same time it beckons a question, does it provide sufficient academic content? This issue has been at least partly addressed by EBS's strategic goal of employing at least 80% of core faculty holding Ph.D. degrees by 2020 (SAR, p. 7). Students highly value practical content of studies, feeling of community, personal approach and readiness of EBS to solve any issues that may arise and help them overcome study problems.

Programme portfolio is largely appropriate given the school's strategic orientations and resources. The weakest element is relatively low percentage of core faculty in most of the programmes. Although this share varies per programme, in total 55% of academic staff members are adjunct faculty (visiting faculty and practitioners). Adjunct faculty represent overall 20% of FTE (SAR, p. 12) which is not problematic if they provide highly specialised content while core courses are delivered by the core faculty. However, in some programmes this percentage seems to be much higher. For example, Business Innovation master degree programme (MBABI), relies almost exclusively on adjunct faculty (16 out of 19 faculty members are adjunct faculty). This issue needs to be carefully considered, particularly in development of new programmes in order to assure programme sustainability and consistency in quality provision (which does not depend heavily on outsourcing). At the same time it should be noted that adjunct faculty (most notably practitioners and international lecturers) are well received and appreciated by students.

EBS places high emphasis on internationalisation. Shrinking high-school population in Estonia means that the number of high quality applicants for study programmes is decreasing, especially in light of tuition policy changes in public sector. Hence, EBS is right to highlight the importance of attracting higher number of foreign students. This can be beneficial also for domestic students (and for Estonian society at large) as international classes enable "internationalisation at home" which is especially important in light of the reluctance of Estonian students to participate in international exchange programmes (due to financial, work, and other considerations). Another aspect of internationalisation is international partner network. EBS has established impressive partner network which allows its students to spend part of their studies at prestigious business schools abroad. The next step would be to enhance and deepen cooperation with foreign partners through joint research and study projects. In this respect, MBABI programme is developing in the right

direction, and can serve as a pilot programme and a benchmark for other EBS programmes.

EBS is not primarily a research-based HEI, however, its ambitions to become an attractive school in the international context (in terms of attracting foreign students and high quality international partners) requires placing more emphasis on academic research. Even though improvement in research outcomes (in terms of peer-reviewed publications) has been achieved in the past years (SAR, p. 15), it still falls short of standard compared with top business schools in the region. Increasing research output requires time, institutional support, resources and commitment (of academic staff and management). The goals of increasing the share of core faculty holding Ph.D. degree and fostering research-based teaching are certainly the steps in the right direction, however increasing the funds dedicated to research development and devising incentive schemes to promote research will most likely be also required.

### 1.3. Strengths and areas for improvement of study programmes by assessment areas

#### **Study programme and study programme development**

##### Standards

- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

##### Comments

The above standards in the domain of 'Study programme and study programme development' are all met. In some cases, (e.g., links with business community, market orientations, entrepreneurial content) the quality exceeds national benchmark.

Programme design, review and revisions are regulated by EBS Curriculum Statute (SAR, p. 17). New programmes are based on market analyses and international benchmarking. The needs of society are also taken into account. Different internal (academic and administrative staff, students) and external (corporate partners, employers, alumni) stakeholders are involved in the process of programme design, supervision and revision. Each programme is headed by the

Head of the programme (appointed by rector) whose main responsibility is to manage the programme and together with Programme Committee steer programme development. The Programme Committees at BA and MA level oversee all programmes at the particular study level, perform annual reviews, and identify overlaps and possibilities for joint activities/modules across the programmes. They also recommend programme improvements (based on review outcomes) to the EBS Senate and Supervisory Board of EBS Education OÜ which gives final approval for programme changes. If a programme does not have enough enrolment it is abandoned (for example, MA in Business Communication).

Courses are designed by a "leading lecturer" who is also responsible for course delivery. He/she may involve also other instructors in the course delivery (e.g., practitioners, other lecturers, etc.). As per EBS guidelines, course syllabus has to include the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) which are consistent with programme ILOs, and ILOs assessment methods. Heads of academic departments approve proposed syllabi.

This process is relatively complex and the impression of assessment team is that decision-making lines are not always clear. For example, what is the relationship between a Head of academic department (who approves course syllabi) and a Head of the programme (who is responsible for programme development)? Also, in case of anomalies (e.g., substandard course delivery), who takes corrective action? Who does the course leader report to? These issues are most likely effectively dealt with as they arise, but they should be clarified also in the EBS official documents (Statutes, Rules, etc.).

On the other hand, regular evaluations and closed feed-back loops in quality assessment contribute to constant improvement and market relevance of the programme. Structure of the programmes supports ILOs, and progression of content from more general and basic courses to more specialised ones is logical.

There is some overlap in the content of some modules in similar domains. Heads of programmes reported that overlaps in content are systematic and are in fact built into the programme in order to strengthen students' knowledge and skills. However, assessment team was not convinced that this logic holds. At the minimum, clear criteria for this purpose should be defined. Any systematic overlaps have to be recognised and understood by teaching staff and communicated to students during the courses in order to assure that they receive value and do not feel cheated. This also requires a lot of coordination among teaching staff, which seems to be, at times, lacking. As reported by faculty they wish there was more communication among colleagues within and between the departments.

EBS Curriculum Statute sets rules regarding program structure at BA and MA levels. Individual programmes are designed within these rules but their curricula structures vary. For example, core courses in BBA amount to 61.5 ECTS, in BBL 31.5 ECTS and in BEB 45 ECTS. This indicates that programmes were not designed "mechanically" but took into account the stakeholders' needs and specificities of programme content. On the other hand, looking at the course

level, some evidence was found that student workload is not reflected in the number of ECTS per course and that ECTS standard is not observed consistently.

Skill development and competence building are highly emphasised at EBS. Most notable is emphasis on language skills (students have ample opportunities to take several language courses). Teamwork and entrepreneurial ideas are also promoted. EBS actively deals with the challenges of digitalisation by favouring open source environment (e.g., non-license software which also saves financial resources) and promoting innovative teaching approaches.

Various levels of prior knowledge of students pose some problems. Teachers reported that when they identify students with prior knowledge of the subject, they assign to them some extra work for bonus points, while for those, that have difficulty to keep up, they offer additional explanations in class, and resort to simplifications. Clearly, this situation is not ideal and could be resolved either by offering (or even prescribing) additional preparatory courses and/or by adopting with more stringent admission criteria.

Student feedback on various elements of course delivery is observed in annual programme evaluation and also in teacher evaluation. However, the students reported that feedback is compulsory and often they just wish to complete the survey as quickly as possible in order to see their grades. This approach should be seriously reconsidered as non-compulsory system would most likely provide better quality and more in-depth student feedback. Also, feedback regarding educational experience collected after the completion of the programme (after a year or two) would provide more relevant input for programme revision. EBS is already making a right step in this direction by organising gathering of graduates few months after graduation.

On the other hand, giving feedback to students during their studies that goes beyond grading their work is also very important. While personal approach is a trademark of EBS, it seems that teachers often fail to (sufficiently) comment the on-going student work or leave assessment to the end of semester. Changing this practice would foster learning process and motivate the students towards continuous improvement of their academic record.

Students have a possibility to part-take in student exchange, however, mobility is low, especially regarding outgoing exchange. Given the quality of partner network of EBS this is really surprising. Apart from financial reasons the issue seems to be credit transfer. EBS should take active steps to help students find the courses at the partner schools that could be recognised as credits at EBS.

### *BA PROGRAMMES*

EBS offers three bachelor degree programmes: BBA, BBL and BEB which are sufficiently distinctive from each other and also from programmes offered at other HEIs. All BA programmes include internship.

BBA is a flagship programme. Since 2011 it is offered also at Helsinki branch, and in 2016 it has been granted EPAS accreditation. It is a standard business administration programme, with two specialisations.

The other two bachelor degree programmes, BEB and BBL, provide differentiation from other business education programmes offered by other Estonian HEIs. BEB programme was designed as a response to the needs of developing Estonian SME sector, and it seems that it importantly influences image of EBS as entrepreneurially-oriented school. All teaching staff at the Department of Entrepreneurship have experience in the field of entrepreneurship and some in business consultancy. BBL combines business administration and foreign language education and is as such unique programme in Estonia. Language courses are taught by the faculty of the Institute of Foreign Languages (FLI). Faculty members at the FLI do not have a research obligation and have lower academic degree requirements (MA degree).

All three programmes include a large number of small courses (in terms of contact hours and ECTS). This increases teaching load for professors (having to deal with large number of courses) and study loads for students (especially as ECTS do not reflect the actual work load, as reported by students – see a comment in General Findings and Recommendations section of this report, p. 5). It would be worth considering merging some of these courses and/or design larger courses with interdisciplinary content.

#### *MA PROGRAMMES*

Apart from two standard master degree programmes run at majority of business schools (MA and MBA), EBS offers two distinct master degree programmes – Master of Entrepreneurship (MBAev; which provides extension of BEB programme) and Master of Business Innovation (MBABI). The latter is a unique programme that started in 2015/2016. While the concept of the programme and its curriculum are very exciting, the main concerns relate to programme's financial viability (it surely carries high cost and has very limited admission), and to academic staff structure (only three faculty members are core faculty).

The challenge of MA programmes is low level of internationalisation. MBA and MBAev include only Estonian students. Especially in the case of MBA programme this may be problematic, as the goal of the programme is to prepare students for managerial challenges, which necessarily pertain to international environment (also the title of the programme is Master of International Business Administration).

#### Strengths

Given the panel's investigations, the following areas are recognised as particular strengths:

- The mission and vision are clearly communicated throughout the school, and academic staff is also able to integrate the key elements in programme objectives.
- The structure of EBS of all BA programmes provides differentiation from other schools (e.g., common core courses in sociology, high emphasis on languages).
- Good employability of students in the Estonian market.

- Profile of EBS graduates is relatively clear-cut: they show capability to work in international environment and have good language skills.
- Some innovation in curricula development (e.g., BBL and MBABI programmes) is apparent.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- EBS needs to look into the credit structure. Is ECTS standard really observed? In many courses workload is not reflected, as per ECTS guidelines based on the European framework of higher education.
- Re-evaluate and reconsider curriculum content logic for content overlaps and repetitions in terms of progression.
- Consider introducing systematic feedback policy related to formal assessment. It seems that current feedback to students is limited to grading; more substantive feedback would be welcome by students.
- Consider allowing students to take courses at other schools (e.g., specialised courses offered elsewhere as electives).
- Internationalisation requires matching in courses and number of ECTS within partner network.
- Consider introducing larger modules which will increase collaboration and communication among academic staff members.

#### Resources

##### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

##### Comments

The above standards applicable to the domain of "Resources" are all met and in some cases exceeded. The panel found the physical and technological resources available for all the programmes to be of a generally high standard. HEI is located in the centre of Tallinn, in premises belonging to EBS Campus OÜ, a daughter company of Estonian Business School Group AS. The area of the study premises is 6,454 square-metres, roughly four square-meters per student. The lecture rooms, language and computer classrooms are equipped with state of the art facilities. All educational activities for the offered programmes can be carried out effectively in this HEI building. EBS's Helsinki Branch is located in Helsinki, at the Technopolis campus in Ruoholahti. EBS appears to be financially stable for executing current and future plan to offer quality education.

The lecture rooms in both locations are equipped with internet connected computers and data projectors, so that the faculty and students can use interactive study methods and presentation facilities. The whole building in Tallinn is equipped with free WiFi hotspots. Two computer classes are equipped with modern computers, network printers and multimedia resources. Five additional computers are available for students in the reading room of EBS Library to access online resources.

In the academic year 2002, the internet based study information system (OIS) was implemented at EBS to improve the management of study processes. Different groups of users have different user rights for interaction with OIS, depending on their status at EBS. Data concerning study programmes, course timetables, study groups, faculty, departments and alumni can be accessed by all users, while access to personal data is limited. The panel found that academic staff and students are very positive about the environment within which they work and study. Study information systems are available and adequate, but there is room for improvement.

EBS provides all the students with necessary study materials either in the form of course reading lists compiled by the teachers, textbooks or combination of these. However, supporting an eco-friendly approach, digital sharing is promoted using less paper (e-study materials, OIS applications and uploads, Dropbox based sharing of team-work assignments etc.). Faculty and students have also access to e-learning environment Moodle. Some courses are supported by specific software – e.g. Stata, R or Latex. The EBS's Library is the largest business library in Estonia. It comprises books and periodicals, as well as online databases. Access to online databases is also available from outside the EBS local network through the OIS.

### *BA PROGRAMMES*

All three BA programmes (BBA, BBL, BEB) are taught at the main building of EBS in Tallinn and BBA is also delivered in the Helsinki campus. Students may borrow the necessary textbooks from the EBS library free of charge, or they may receive their personal copy (e.g. language textbooks); the collections of the Library are adequate for the needs of the bachelor programmes. EBS has good connection with the Estonian business community and many industry professionals deliver courses in various EBS programmes. One specific contribution has been the business incubator in the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, which enables students to launch and manage their own companies during the course.

In almost all study programmes special attention is paid to the quality and authenticity of required and recommended materials. Textbooks and course materials used for taught modules are systematically revised and updated on a regular basis. The students of Entrepreneurship and Business Administration have the opportunity of benefiting from "Start-up Hub" which is used actively for the teamwork tasks for some of the courses. There are well-equipped computer classes and public rooms for promoting socialisation among students.

### *MA PROGRAMMES*

All MA programmes (MA, MBAev, MBABI, MBA) are delivered on EBS premises in Tallinn and one MA programme (MA) in the Helsinki campus. In general, the resource needs for the MA programme are well covered. The academic affairs office and library are always able to guarantee the necessary resources such as study materials well before the start of a course especially in case of any new developments/requirements in the curriculum. A wide range of journals, books, eBooks is also available through subscription to the HEICO and ProQuest. The required and recommend study resources collections appear to be adequate for the needs of the master programme students. Online learning materials, well-functioning online OIS Study System and Moodle study environment, virtual learning groups in social networks, etc. play an important role in supporting master programme students especially on-the-job MBA student to advance in their study process.

#### Strengths

Given the panel's investigations, the following areas are commended as particular strengths:

- EBS's library is the largest business library in Estonia, which provides adequate number of textbooks and other teaching materials to students. The necessary professional literature and study materials are available in both English and Estonian languages.
- Study spaces are of good size and quality and sufficient to achieve the aims of the programmes, providing for the needs of both students and teachers.
- Some of the modules are delivered in premises outside Estonia jointly with international students and business community for Business Innovation program. This is clearly in line with the internationalisation focus of EBS and promotes student employability.

#### Areas of improvement

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- The current problem is the shortage of case studies suitable to be used in the study process. As many lecturers have attended a training course for the compilation of case studies, there is hope for the improvement of the situation.
- An important resource is the study information system (OIS), which needs upgrading in order to enable more detailed monitoring of the self-development interests of the students. Some students seek more integration between Moodle resources and the study information system.
- EBS is continuously ordering the textbooks and handbooks for key subjects but the actual budget spent per year was not available or set. It would be better to set a minimum annual budget for the library to update necessary resources even without any specific requirements for taught courses.



## Teaching and learning

### Standards

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

### Comments

The above standards applicable to the domain of "Teaching and Learning" are all met and in some cases exceeded. EBS managed to design a good learning environment for their students and staff. Quality management of studies is one of key elements of such learning environment and it is the responsibility of the Vice Rector for Studies. Improvement in the quality of the study environment is the responsibility of the EBS Campus and the Office of Academic Affairs. EBS has good system in place for internal auditing of studies through some key measures:

- Internal quality audits by the management of EBS;
- Regular surveys of the students and academic staff on the quality of the study process;
- Analysis of the graduates' evaluations of the quality of studies;
- Analysis of the employers' evaluations of the programme and the quality of graduates;
- Evaluation of courses – based on regular surveying of students.

The panel observed a working environment that facilitates meeting the needs of learners' individual and social development. There are good working relationships between academic staff and students. Teachers set aside hours each week in which they can be consulted by students. One of the key strength of EBS is offering opportunities for students to study following an individual study plan, if the abilities of the student or exceptional circumstances do not permit them to take up a regular study load. Academic departments ensure the quality of the taught modules and the content of these courses. The head of the department is usually a professor responsible for the coordination of the teaching and research activities of the faculty in the department to ensure that the courses have clear objectives and to guarantee the ILOs proceeding from the general goals of the programme. The head, together with the faculty member, reviews/revises the course description, decides on the study literature and finally approves the syllabus.

In general, the study process is well organised. Almost all students are supported on a daily basis by the BA/MA study consultants, tutoring from the faculty (e.g., for specific courses, term papers, research projects and the final thesis). The head of the programme when necessary could be approached for consultation on matters such as choosing a major, finding a new job, personal career counselling etc. Online support as well face-to-face meetings on a regular basis are appreciated by the EBS students as well alumni. This is effectively complemented by small class sizes, online support tools (such as OIS, Moodle, online study groups, personal Skype sessions) and interactive teaching in the classroom. It is good to note that students described their study process as professional, flexible and fully supported by individual tutoring to meet the individual needs, abilities and expectations of students. Although the level of student mobility could be improved, students are well-informed about existing opportunities and encouraged to take them up. The panel found evidence of a variety of acceptable assessment methods being used to evaluate students' achievements.

#### *BA PROGRAMMES*

The structure and balance between in-class learning hours and out-of-class learning hours depend on the delivery mode. In the stationary mode, approximately 40% of the total hours of student work are covered by in-class learning. In the non-stationary mode 15– 40% of the total hours of student work are covered by in-class learning. Due to the peculiarity of the BBL programme – the intensity and interactivity of the language studies – the programme is only offered in stationary daytime delivery mode, and so classes are delivered evenly throughout the semester, and the study process assumes the continuous presence of students.

#### *MA PROGRAMMES*

EBS emphasises practical learning and in-class activities for all of their programmes especially for MA programmes. The share of pure lectures is less than 50% in most of the courses. Following the principle of academic freedom, all the faculty members involved in the teaching of the MA programme are free to design their teaching and assessment methods. In the most MA programme, 3-ECTS courses usually have 20 contact hours (58 hours of independent work) and 6-ECTS courses have 36 contact hours (120 hours of individual work). However, this varies from programme to programme. Independent work is described in the study programme in OIS, and mostly it is assessed via graded assignments that frequently contribute towards the final grade.

The special focus of the MBAev programme is knowledge sharing between potential and experienced entrepreneurs and assisting potential entrepreneurs in finding the right self-development path. The programme starts from the course Entrepreneurial orientation – internal entrepreneurship, where an important learning outcome is the ability of new master students to analyse their entrepreneurial orientations and the priorities of their entrepreneurial activities and compare different opportunities for action.

In MBABI programme the teaching and learning are harmonized with the real-life processes applied in new venture creation and product/service development. The core of the study programme is the three-stage innovation process in which the student teams develop real world innovation projects originated by student teams or given by companies. The subjects taught are relevant to the specific stage in the innovation process where the lecturers also act as experts to advise teams in their field of expertise. The assessment methods used in the majority of subjects are based on class interaction and practical assignments (individual as well as team-based) carried out before, during and after the course. To ensure the development of the project and the learning along that process, the projects are chosen and supervised by the Head of the Programme throughout the study programme.

### Strengths

Given the panel's investigations, the following areas are commended as particular strengths:

- Teaching approach is working well (e.g., combination of practical work, lectures by international professors, and visiting lectures by practitioners are appreciated by students). Most teachers use a variety of unique and innovative teaching methods that stimulates student learning. While, this clearly could be seen as strength, it is better to define and specify the innovative approaches and should be based on well-established national/international benchmarks.
- Cooperation agreements that EBS has with foreign partners represent an advantage relative to other Estonian schools in attracting foreign students.
- Student assessment results are well balanced.
- Smaller class sizes in several skills-oriented subjects and during seminars allow interactive approach and personalised feedback and they seem to be happy at the EBS.
- The design of the most of the EBS programmes aim to blend theory with business practice. Students are provided with a broad theoretical background in some core courses and some special subjects are more oriented towards business practice such as Business Planning and International Business.

### Areas for improvement

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- A faculty member is relatively free to decide on the specific topics and methods of teaching in his/her course. Although it is done with some structure but panel recommends a more systematic institutional support for development of learning and teaching.
- To prevent fraud and plagiarism, faculty members closely monitor students' written assignments, including term papers and theses using open source programme WCopyfind. The seriousness of plagiarism and principles of academic conduct are explained to the students at the

- beginning of their studies and re-emphasised in all courses. It is recommended that EBS should invest in international plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin.
- EBS is preparing implementation of new models for the process of preparing final theses and for final exams. Clear quality criteria need to be developed for such implementation.
  - Ensure a consistent student workload: courses with the same ECTS weighting should require equivalent amounts of student work (including independent study) in line with national and European standards.
  - Increase support for student mobility: more can be done to support students' inward and outward mobility. Our suggestion would be to simplify the means by which students can transfer their programme credits acquired in other universities (within Estonia and internationally) and to develop more flexible procedures for recognising prior learning abroad, recognising that courses taught elsewhere will differ in title and content even whilst proving adequate substitutes for those in BA and MA programmes.
  - EBS should develop an office for work placement and internships. There is some support provided by EBS, but students feel like there is less structured approach to engage relevant industry partner. Students who met the panel mentioned that although EBS has some industry connections they do not think EBS union has enough connections with the companies. This makes it difficult for the students to find relevant and interesting internship places since it is mainly student's own responsibility to find internship places.
  - Better relation of study work with the research work of lecturers. This is certainly a positive aspect but should be promoted further by making the faculty research work more visible for the students.
  - It is important that EBS should take measures and start a dialogue with key stakeholders (Government, EKKA, Estonian labour and employment organisation) to convince students to complete their studies in a nominal time. There should be some sort of motivation for the students to complete their studies before entering the job market on a full-time basis.

### Teaching staff

#### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills

- development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

### Comments

In EBS the teaching staff is divided into six academic departments: Economics and Finance, Entrepreneurship, Information Technology, Law and Public Administration, Management, Marketing and Communication. In the organization there is also four centres: Centre for Free Economic Thought, Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Centre for Management Research, Centre for Business Ethics and the Institute of Foreign Languages.

There are three different groups of faculty: core faculty and two types of adjunct faculty: visiting faculty and practitioners. The number of core faculty has been growing steadily during the past years. The core faculty represents FTE 39 and the adjunct faculty FTE 10 (about 20 %). According to the self-assessment report the involvement of a substantial number of adjunct faculty has been a strategic decision. The number of publications of staff members seems to be growing.

According to the lists of lecturers per programme it can be stated that more than 75 % of the staff members teach in more than one BA programme.

Judging from SAR and interviews during site-visit, the strategy of EBS is well implemented and the motivated and enthusiastic teaching staff is a clear strength. The Manuals and Guides provided for teaching staff promote common framework for grading and course description templates.

A Performance Management process is in use but the impacts were not clearly reported or brought up in the interviews. Instead, it has been suggested that an evaluation system for faculty and other staff should be developed. The teaching staff members have individual job contracts in which the division workload between teaching and research is agreed.

In order to contribute to the development of pedagogical skills EBS has participated in an EU funded programme to enhance the diversity of teaching methods.

According to the self-assessment report the faculty members teaching in the English programmes have a good command of the English language. The language skills are however not officially tested or otherwise verified.

Internationalization is emphasized in the strategy of EBS and the academic mobility is supported. The number of international partners is extensive but it did not come crystal clear how active all these partners are and what are the numbers for staff mobility. The number of international teaching staff seems quite low.

Teaching staff has adequate qualifications to be successful in reaching the intended learning outcomes of the study programme. The teaching staff has collaboration in teaching and research with other higher education institution and with external partners. Visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching. The teaching staff is engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.

Teaching workload is set by EBS guidelines however other workload should be also taken into account. For example, teachers mentioned that textbook writing by is not rewarded and, in their opinion, not much appreciated by the school. Universities (public and private) that teach in the national language should strive to develop and nurture professional terminology hence some mechanism could be put in place for recognising this type of endeavours of the academic staff.

### *BA PROGRAMMES*

Every course has a "leading lecturer". This system is in place to guarantee the objective and fair assessment of student work.

In the SAR 79 staff members are listed as lectures of International Business Administration (BBA) programme. Out of those about 47 % were adjunct faculty and about 30 % of the lecturers have a PhD degree. It has been part of the profile of the programme to use corporate representatives as lecturers and supervisors for the students.

International Business and Languages (BBL) programme has 32 staff members. Out of those about 34 % were adjunct faculty and only 3 of the lecturers have a PhD degree. Almost 90 % of the lectures in this programme also teach in other BA programmes. It is also stated in the self-assessment report that the profile of the BBL programme is somewhat different from the other BA programmes. The faculty of the Institute of Foreign Languages (FLI) does not have a research obligation and has lower academic degree requirements (MA degree) than the other programmes. It seems that the lecturers in the Institute of Foreign Languages have a distinctive combination of language skills combined with business terminology. Also the cooperation with different departments appears to be vivid.

There are 54 staff members listed as lectures in Entrepreneurship and Business Administration (BEB) programme. Out of those about 43 % were adjunct faculty and 31 % of the lecturers have a PhD degree. Less than 20 % of the lectures teaching in this programme are not teaching in the other two BA programmes. The practical experience of the teaching faculty seems to be at a good level.

### *MA PROGRAMMES*

The MA in International Business Administration is the flagship master programme at EBS. In the programme exists three specialist fields: marketing management, finances and export management and organizational change and leadership.

The SAR lists 48 staff members as lectures of International Business Administration (MA) programme. Out of those about 56 % were adjunct faculty

and about 48 % of the lecturers have a PhD degree. According to the self-evaluation report most of the core faculty has participated in training to improve their pedagogical skills. There is a mentoring process for early career teachers. The teaching staff represents a diverse mixture of expertise. Also it was stated that the faculty members teaching in the English programmes have a good command of the English language. The language skills are however not officially tested or otherwise verified.

The Master of Entrepreneurship (MBAev) is a rather new programme that started in 2013. In the SAR 32 staff members are listed as lectures of the Master of Entrepreneurship programme. Out of those about 53 % were adjunct faculty and about 44 % of the lecturers have a PhD degree. The adjunct staff members are practitioners and experts from the field of entrepreneurship. Co-lecturing with international partners is utilized in this programme. The feedback from the students is reported to be at a good level. The students' opinions are discussed in faculty and measures are taken accordingly. Teaching staff is involved in developing their teaching. Programme has good contacts to local businesses

Business Innovation programme (MBABI) is the only English language MBA programme at EBS. It is part of the internationalisation process stated in the strategy of EBS. 19 staff members were listed in the SAR as lectures of the Master of Business Innovation programme. Out of those about 16 were adjunct faculty and 10 of the lecturers have a PhD degree. Due to the large number of the adjunct teachers, extra support system seems to be in need. A core faculty member and the Head of the Programme accommodate the adjunct lecturers. More than half of the teaching staff has business experience and academic background, which is considered to be in an important role in teaching in this programme. External mentors are also used for the student teams. According to the SAR, most of the core faculty has participated in training to improve their pedagogical skills.

International Business Administration (MBA) programme was launched in 2002. The aim of the programme is to provide modern business and management knowledge to students who have a BA degree in other area than business. 18 staff members are listed in the SAR as lectures of the Master of Business Innovation programme. These are the core staff members and the adjunct members are not listed. Out of those 18 staff members 11 have a PhD degree. It was pointed out in the report that all the members of the core staff who have a Master's degree at the moment are enrolled in the EBS doctoral programme. The adjunct staff consists of international professionals and Estonian top managers as guest speakers. Also in this programme, the feedback from the students is reported to be at a good level. The students' opinions are discussed in faculty and measures are taken accordingly. Teaching staff is involved in developing their teaching.

### Strengths

EBS has the following strengths:

- Motivation and engagement level of academic staff is very high.

- Teaching staff have practical and or international experience.
- Student tutoring is appreciated by students. The overall feedback from students and alumni is positive.
- The teaching staff is versatile with good balance of academic and practical backgrounds and active links to business life.
- The core faculty is updating pedagogical skills and have real time knowledge also from their own PhD dissertations.
- Collaboration with different external national and international partners seems to be active.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- Re-assess the percentage of core faculty in total academic staff, and the balance between different groups of faculty
- Enhance communication and collaboration between lecturers by promoting networking opportunities among academic staff.
- Re-evaluate workload allocation model. Heavy workload of the faculty members could be taken into closer consideration.
- Enhance internationalization of the teaching staff.
- Increase the number of international faculty members in MA programmes; core or adjunct. This could be obtained by active recruiting and or utilising current international partners.
- Support high performance by active performance management process; distinguish and recognise top performers
- The current feedback system could be developed into a systematic process so that the management of the feedback would be identical in all programmes and that the feedback could be sorted and split by programmes, faculties and lecturers.
- EBS would benefit from more comprehensive approach to developing professional and pedagogical skills of the teaching staff. EBS could even set its own standards for teacher training as well as pedagogical and language skills of the teaching staff.

#### Students

##### Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.



### Comments

The above standards applicable to the domain of 'Students' are all met and in some cases even exceeded. Entry requirements are designed for the programmes to select motivated and serious candidates. According to self-assessment the educational documents of international candidates for previous qualifications and their eligibility is checked with the ENIC/NARIC bureau of Estonia. The motivation of applicants is assessed through the means of interviews where students reflect upon their prior learning, current challenges and future career plans. During the panel visit, the panel observed that most of the students are highly motivated and have clearly articulated reasons (such as practical approach, positive image) for preferring EBS over the other available schools.

There are 1434 students currently enrolled in EBS, 1014 at bachelor and 416 at master level. During the last three academic years a total of 819 bachelor students were admitted for three BBA programmes of which 410 graduated and 452 (55%) dropped-out. In the Helsinki campus, 187 new students were admitted, 59 graduated and 77 (41%) dropped-out. Currently there are 228 bachelor students studying in Helsinki campus. During the same period a total of 303 master level students were admitted in four master programmes of which 162 graduated and 240 (79%) dropped-out. Although student application numbers were not available, EBS is able to fill student places whilst also being selective and ensuring that places are given to the most motivated and capable students. The rather high drop-out rates appear to be a concern for EBS, although the staff considered it as one of the issues that needs to be addressed within the context of very high employability rates in the country.

The panel found that students are motivated and happy with their study programmes, teaching faculty, school management and administration. Majority of the students are also satisfied with the programme and module content, form and dynamic teaching delivery methods. Students appreciate personal pastoral care and support provided by EBS. Students have opportunities to study other higher education institutions as part of their programmes, however some enhancement is required for take-up the increasing opportunities. Outgoing exchange students also receive help from their study consultant in compiling their study plan. The study consultants ensure that the students' study plan for the foreign university meets the requirements of the programme. EBS provides high level of support and assistance to its local, international and exchange students. The employability of EBS graduates is high and the panel saw clear evidence that employers are both content with the quality of graduates they receive. The employers appreciated the continuously improving quality of graduates and have expressed their willingness to employ them in future.

### Strengths

Given the panel's investigations, the following areas are commended as particular strengths:

- General high student satisfaction and enthusiasm regarding their programmes of study and EBS.

- The active involvement of students in the feedback process for the development of current and future programmes.
- The flexible timetable planning that allows students to combine work and study. Students also appreciate that most of the studies are in English language, which helps them in their internationalisation and foreign employability.
- The level of student involvement in the ongoing faculty research projects is commendable at both the bachelor and master level.
- The employment rate of EBS graduates is high and employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- According to students who met the panel, in case of retake exams the higher grades are not kept. There is need to check this in order to assess modules as per EU higher education framework. Assessments should comply to the EU HE framework. A standard practice in other institutions is to keep the higher mark from all the obtained marks unless there is a reason and it is well justified and communicated properly to the students.
- It seems that feedback to students is limited to exam grading. The panel also observed that access to the exam answer keys is not given during exam review. Thus, there is need to improve the exam feedback system in such a way that students not only get opportunities to know their mistakes but also be able to learn from their mistake. Consideration has to be given to introduce systematic feedback policy related to all formal assessments.
- There is a need to deal with the dropout rates and completion of study programmes within the nominal time. The panel recommends that attention be given to the percentage of graduating students and dropout students considering the relatively high dropout rates for almost all bachelor and master level programmes. Student support and guidance in this regard could help to ensure that students are given the necessary information, advice and motivation to complete their studies before starting their career.

## 2. Assessment report of SPG at Tallinn University

### 2.1. Introduction

As an institution Tallinn University (TU) was founded in 2005 by an Act of the parliament of the Republic of Estonia. TU has grown to include six schools, two colleges, five centres of excellence, eight research centres and 13 support units. It is the largest university of humanities in Tallinn with more than 9,000 students. The strategic goal of TU for 2015 – 2020 is to develop interdisciplinary research-based focus fields (currently five are active).

Study programmes in Business and Administration under evaluation are offered in two academic units of TU as shown in the table below:

| Academic unit   | Programme   | Level |
|---|---|-------|
| Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School (BFM) | Advertising and Publicity Studies                         | BA    |
|   | Public Relations  | BA    |
|   | Communication Management                                  | MA    |
| School of Governance, Law and Society (SOGOLAS)         | Marketing<br><i>No admission to programme since 2013.</i> | BA    |
|   | Public and Business Management                            | BA    |
|   | Public Administration                                     | MA    |

There are 367 bachelor and 73 master students currently enrolled in the programmes that belong to the Business and Administration study programme group.

Statistical data of the study programme group is the following:

| Study Programme                      | Admission/Graduates |       |       |       | No of students |      |      |                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|------|------|---------------------|
|                                      | 2013                | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2013           | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 <sup>[1]</sup> |
| Advertising and Publicity Studies BA | 41/44               | 43/31 | 29/21 | 25/35 | 124            | 125  | 113  | 94                  |
| Marketing BA                         | 1/20                | 0/45  | 0/41  | 0/4   | 138            | 70   | 19   | 14                  |
| Public Relations BA                  | 28/0                | 28/29 | 27/21 | 25/28 | 99             | 94   | 93   | 88                  |
| Communication Management MA          | 10/18               | 16/13 | 17/12 | 14/13 | 47             | 39   | 38   | 35                  |
| Public Administration MA             | 14/5                | 14/9  | 15/9  | 15/6  | 44             | 40   | 35   | 38                  |
| Public and Business Management BA    | 42/17               | 76/16 | 48/9  | 46/31 | 105            | 152  | 174  | 171                 |

Source: Tallinn University, Revised data after the site visit, December 2016.

Due to shared resources and common TU policies (guidelines, strategy, etc.) several features and quality assessments are identical across programmes. Hence, evaluations of individual study programmes are replaced by evaluation of the entire study programme group.

In the section below, we evaluate compliance with quality standards, provide general comments, list the institution's strengths and provide suggestions for improvement. Where relevant and appropriate, distinctions between the two schools under evaluation, and/or individual study programmes offered at these schools are indicated.

## 2.2. General findings and recommendations at the study programme group level

TU has recently completed major restructuring and merger processes, in which 26 academic units were reorganised into six schools. A special feature is the school's emphasis on creativity; it has even appointed a member of management team who focuses on developing this area.

The assessment team recognises the difficulties of restructuring processes. Merging previously independent institutions, each with individual governance and organisational structure, was surely not an easy process. Schools have their own development and strategic plans, but are guided by the same vision and mission. TU's mission is to support the sustainable development of Estonia through research and the application of its results, education of intellectuals, public discussions, and the promotion of academic partnership. The university's vision is to be an innovative centre of research and education, which is academically enriching for its members, and respected not only in Estonia, but renowned internationally (SAR, p. 5).

Even though the sentiment in some schools seems to be that merger has brought also some disadvantages, the general view is that the benefits stemming from synergies outweigh the shortcomings arising from loss of independence. This is especially evident in efforts to reap the benefits of newly introduced interdisciplinary student projects across schools. The assessment team commends these efforts as they go a long way towards fulfilling the TU's mission and vision. Students' competencies and knowledge developed through such interdisciplinary projects may represent a distinguishing feature of TU's BA and MA programmes, and provide an important competitive advantage of the university in the market.

Management of TU indicated that BFM and SOGOLAS are successful in the local market. Their programmes are well positioned and differentiated relative to other local HEIs. SOGOLAS receives significant funding from non-public sources for research (EU and private sector projects) and teaching. Also about 50% of BFM's budget is funded from non-public sources (via study fees and various sponsored projects).

International recognition is part of the TU's vision but more efforts are needed in this area to achieve this goal. Clearly, economic development of a small economy depends on successful internationalisation of business sector. Joint efforts of previously independent academic units can strengthen university-wide international cooperation and can increase success rate in international tenders (e.g., EU projects). However, these efforts still seem to be in early stages of development. The challenges facing TU pertain to all dimensions of internationalisation: internationalisation of faculty, student body, programme portfolio (number of programmes offered in English language), and size and quality of international partner network. Hence, a lot still needs to be done.

TU has implemented regulations that refer to all schools. Based on the SAR as well as site visit, the organisational structure is rather complex and roles and responsibilities of different managing and governing bodies are not very clear. For example, what are the roles of Heads of study programmes and Programme Administrators? What is the hierarchy?

Teaching staff is mostly Estonian (less than 10% are foreign nationals). According to the site-visit interviews, the number of incoming exchange students is satisfactory, but outgoing exchange is disappointing. The reasons seem to be typical for Estonian environment: many students hold full time jobs while (also full-time) studying and are not willing and/or able to complete part of their studies abroad. In addition, the courses taken at foreign institutions may not be recognised at the TU due to lack of similarities of the study programmes, further impeding outgoing exchange.

Somewhat surprising is the TU's view on national policy that abolished tuition for public university programmes. It would be expected that public universities would welcome this policy measure due to its effect on the pool of applicants. Some high school students that could not afford tuition would be now in a better position to continue their studies at the university level (at first and second bologna cycle). As it is, it appears that neither private nor public HEIs fully embraced this change. TU lost a source of independent funding, and as a consequence this adversely affected the enrolment numbers (TU introduced stringer enrolment quota to keep down the cost), which, in turn, changed the dynamics of classes and teaching approaches. Due to high drop-out rates, which are characteristic for the national environments and are an important issue also for most of the TU's programmes, the number of students is further diminished in the senior years of the programmes.

Part of the TU's mission is to support academic partnerships. However, cooperation with other institutions is limited and can be considered one of the weaknesses at TU. Shared seminars, summer schools and research projects are examples of many opportunities for cooperation.

### Strengths

- Interdisciplinary approach to student projects. Students can learn from each other and enhance their competencies, but also faculty from different programmes/schools have to cooperate which may lead to higher quality of programme delivery university-wide. Successful implementation of this initiative will require high degree of coordination among teachers of different schools which may facilitate full integration of schools.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Increase the level of internationalisation and develop key performance indicators to measure progress.
- TU should encourage and support the schools to sign international agreements that would facilitate student exchange, and provide additional flexibility in curricula to recognise ECTS earned abroad.
- Increase cooperation with other schools in Estonia in the same domain to increase learning opportunities for students and foster development of business education in Estonia.

## 2.3. Strengths and areas for improvement of study programmes by assessment areas

Evaluation pertains to five programmes in SPG Business and Administration offered by two schools: Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School (BFM) and School of Governance, Law and Society (SOGOLAS). BA programme Marketing has not been admitting new students since 2013, and will be closed in 2018, hence it was not included in the evaluation.

### Study programme and study programme development

#### Standards

- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

### Comments

Quality standards for study programme structure and development are all met. Three of the evaluated programmes are offered at BFM (two at BA and one at MA level) and two at SOGOLAS (one BA and one MA programme).

TU adopted the 3+2 study system in 2002/2003, and introduced ECTS credits system whereby one credit corresponds to 26 hours of work by a student.

The general structure of study programmes in the university is uniform and is defined in the Statute of Study Programmes which was changed in 2016. The Statute stipulates the type of the courses and number of credits (given in ranges) per particular type of course (SAR, pp. 9-10). Both BA and MA programmes include university-wide courses, subject-specific courses, open elective courses, professional placement and bachelor thesis. This means that, despite the prescribed curriculum structure, the mix of different types of courses can vary across programmes. About 40% of ECTS is dedicated to a study groups, other content is shared. The percentage of elective content (options within subject-specific courses + open electives) seems rather high (up to 50% in MA and up to 40% in BA programmes). This increases flexibility as it allows students to focus on a specific field and it also facilitates exchange, but on the other hand it may dilute the intended learning objectives. To mitigate this problem, students receive recommendations regarding the electives through individual counselling.

Programme design procedures are also uniform: based on established rules academic units draw up the objectives of study programmes and modules within them. Following a discussion by the School's Council, the study programme is presented to the Study Commission for amendments. The final version of the study programme is presented to the Senate for approval. Once approved, the study programmes are available on the university's Study Information System ÖIS (SAR, p. 8).

Programmes are developed based on market inputs (reflecting market needs) and on input of different stakeholders including alumni and employers. Stakeholders' feedback is collected and taken into account. Many teachers have practical experiences in their fields of expertise. Programme changes (e.g., new course) can be proposed once a year. Changes within a course are in a domain of lead lecturers.

Learning objectives and intended learning outcomes are provided in course syllabi. Since many courses are attended by students from different study programmes, the alignment of learning objectives and outcomes of courses and study programmes may become an issue. This is addressed in a way that students are split in different seminar groups according to their respective programmes. Course content is then adapted to the ILOs of specific programme. Nevertheless, in such matrix structure, where students take courses that belong to a large number of programmes, content overlaps on one hand and gaps on the other may become a real issue. Prerequisites for each course should thus be carefully considered.

Quality assessment and measures for continuous development of programmes are in place; all programmes evaluate their position and performance, identified areas of improvement and propose action plans.

A somewhat unique feature of TU programmes are interdisciplinary projects, which will become compulsory for all programmes (17 pilot projects are run in Fall semester in 2016-2017). Supervisors and students can pitch the idea which is presented in a project fair where students can sign up to a group. Each group has to include students from at least three disciplines. It has a lead professor who can include in the mentoring other lecturers and/or external stakeholders according to their expertise.

### *BFM PROGRAMMES*

#### *Advertising and Publicity Studies (BA)*

A predecessor of this programme was first offered in 1993, and accredited in the current form in 2004. It is the only advertising-focused study in Estonia. As of September 2015, the programme is managed by the BFM. As a consequence, the link between this and other programmes offered at BFM has become stronger, as the students also take courses offered by other programmes. This change has been perceived by academic staff as positive.

While this programme may be unique in Estonia, it is not clear why it is a separate programme from the *Public Relations BA*. It seems that two so narrowly specialised programmes do not serve either students or TU. The teaching staff and programme heads reported that students of both programmes take many courses together. This indicates that the separation of both programmes may be artificial and non-necessary. Development of a single marketing communication BA programme with two areas of specialisations could better meet market needs.

Advertising and Publicity Studies programme aims to balance practical skills and theoretical knowledge. In programme design (and redesign) the needs of the labour market are taken into account. 25-30 students have been admitted in recent years, with about five applicants per study place. Teaching and learning methods include real business projects, lectures, seminars, thesis workshops. Rapid development of digitalisation is seen as a challenge, as theories are in flux. In the interviews it was reported that systematic approach to incorporate new theories in courses is missing, and that course adaptation is left to each instructor. This issue has been recognised and will be addressed at the programme level in the future.

#### *Public Relations (BA)*

The Public Relations programme was first offered in 2011 when the Institute of Communication was established. Although public relations was previously taught as part of the media studies programme at the TU, the new programme at the Institute of Communication underwent substantial changes in order to follow the demands of the Bologna 3+2 system and the guidelines of the European Public Relations Research Association EUPRERA (SAR, p. 13). Since 2015, the Public Relations programme is offered within BFM which, in view of management and



faculty opens up new opportunities to include audio-visual communication and story-telling in the programme. As noted above, the assessment panel is not convinced that both BA programmes in marketing communication at BFM should be run as separate programmes. Merger of these two programmes would promote developing broader perspectives and strategic considerations that are relevant in market place.

The Public Relations programme is focused on practical approaches which are supported by theory. It is differentiated from Tartu University programme in content (more focused) and approach (theory based). Admission in recent years is below 30, which is consistent with lowering admission quota.

In the programme traditional teaching styles are prevalent, as student groups are relatively large (about 100 students). Students have to complete different projects and have to attend thesis writing seminars that start early in the programme. The goal is to develop thesis project throughout the studies which also improves completion rate.

#### *Communication Management (MA)*

MA programme in Communication management was first offered in 2013. It is the only of the evaluated programmes that is run in the English language. It is the only programme with large share of foreign students.

The purpose of the MA in Communication Management is to train future experts in various fields of communication. Compared to other MA programmes in Business and Administration, the number and the scope of theoretical courses is larger. In addition to theoretical compulsory courses, the students have an opportunity to study a specialization module that is focused on such interdisciplinary field as Intercultural Communication.

The programme is available to students with a BA degree in any field, provided that they pass the levelling module courses during the 1st semester of their MA studies. The enrolment is limited to about 15 students year. Small number of students permits individual approach. Main teaching and learning methods applied are problem-based learning, interactive lectures, group works and students' empirical case studies.

Although the programme is focused on cross-cultural issues, due to financial restrictions, foreign teachers are invited only on a short-term basis, usually within Erasmus exchange programmes. This goes against the main purpose of the programme. Certainly, financial viability may be an issue, however, as the programme is tuition-based, attracting more students would improve financial situation, and would allow developing programme's full potential.

#### *SOGOLAS PROGRAMMES*

SOGOLAS had prior to the establishment of TU a very good reputation and brand recognition in the Estonian market. The management and academic staff of SOGOLAS believe that merger of structural units in TU may have diluted the

brand to a certain extent and thereby weakened the programmes' position in educational market. Both programmes offered by the school were perceived to be stronger prior merger, especially as they are currently under pressure to cut costs. During the interview it was mentioned that the position may be strengthened in the future by merging some of the private institutions in the field into TU.

#### *Public and Business Management (BA)*

BA programme in Public and Business Management was launched in 2002. It was one of the first new programmes being prepared at TU after the transfer to the Bologna 3+2 system. It received full accreditation in 2006 and passed transitional evaluation in 2010.

Following the aim of TU to offer practical education and combine it with theoretical background, the programme was specifically targeted at locals, who are already employed in the public or private sector, usually have families and cannot leave the region for longer study periods, but wish to upgrade their degrees received before 1995 when there were no study programmes in public administration. The programme still matches the labour market needs and the needs of the target group (SAR, p. 53). Programme had a branch in Rakvere (Rakvere College) which is now being closed due to insufficient enrolment and lack of funds.

Public and Business Management programme is the largest programme in SPG Business and Administration at TU. Post 2013-reform enrolment is about 45 students, with more than 400 admission applications submitted. However, completion rates within nominal time have been very low, even compared to an average completion rate of about 50% at other TU programmes. The situation has much improved in 2016, when ratio of graduates to admitted students is about 3/4 (SAR, p. 14).

Teaching and learning methods include the use of contemporary approaches. However, in their evaluations students have pointed out the size of the seminar groups (too big) and disparity between ECTS and the actual workload. These issues have been recognised and are being addressed.

#### *Public Administration (MA)*

Public Administration master degree programme was first offered in 1996 by the former Institute of Government and Politics, and it was awarded national accreditation in 2006. The programme has undergone significant changes in the past decades; the last was in 2016, when all programmes of Tallinn University were renewed in order to increase the interdisciplinary and international dimension in study programmes and by adding courses which develop linguistic and digital competencies (SAR, p. 12).

The aim of the programme is to develop students' advanced knowledge and analytical skills in the field of governance and public administration. Besides its

research orientation, the study programme aims to contribute to the development of welfare policies and governance, with special focus on political analyses.

It is a very small programme in terms of student intake (about 15 students annually), with low completion rates. The reform of 2013 increased competition among the applicants which influenced the quality of admitted students. Teaching methods remain very traditional. The teachers expressed the need for more pedagogical training which would contribute to adoption of new teaching approaches. In the field of political science and governance, field work is also used.

### Strengths

- Compulsory interdisciplinary projects in all programmes.
- It appears that programmes correspond to current Estonian market needs.
- Balance of theory and practice is appropriate.
- Certain degree of flexibility is provided at the course level to accommodate the needs (learning objectives and outcomes) of different programmes.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Consider merging BA programmes in Advertising and Publicity Studies and Public Relations. Instead of separating the subfields of marketing communication into independent degrees some flexibility within one programme should be provided to address the specificity of specialisations. Two separate programmes imply that bachelor degree programmes in marketing communication are seen as artisan programmes with minimal strategic perspective.
- Systematic approach to internationalisation should be adopted, including improving flexibility in curricula to enable students to earn ECTS abroad, number of courses in English, faculty mobility, and also providing internships to foreign students.
- Student feedback is not systematically incorporated in designing and re-designing programmes.
- Programme design should take into account the needs of the students who work and the obstacles they are facing. Promises should be fulfilled.
- TU needs to look into the ECTS structure. There is room for clarification relating the credit structure and student workload.
- Curriculum content logic should be re-evaluated and reconsidered for content overlaps and repetitions in terms of progression.

### Resources

#### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in

|   |
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| student numbers, etc.).<br>✓ Resource development is sustainable. |
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### Comments

The standards for “Resources” are met and the assessment panel finds the overall resources to be adequate and that the physical and technical resources available in TU are of good quality.

TU has a new and modern main campus in the centre of Tallinn. All class rooms are equipped with data projectors and teaching staff uses laptops and data projectors in their classes. Course materials and syllabi are distributed electronically via ÖIS or in Moodle e-learning environment. Each of the academic staff members has a workplace and a personal computer.

The TU Library is well equipped. In addition to study materials the students can use computers in the library for studying in web-based courses and for accessing digital materials and e-databases. Each student has a library account that gives access to databases. The databases in use are very extensive. Library statistics indicate that the use of databases is increasing. The library also has computers and study rooms for individual and group assignments available for the students. Staff and students seem to be satisfied with the working conditions. TU appears to be sufficiently financially stable to implement current and future plan in offering quality education but the funding is not too ample. There are some challenges with financial constraints and financial resources should be allocated according to strategic planning. For example, if international cooperation is a priority, resources should be allocated to support it, e.g., to make sure that staff has adequate opportunities for networking.

### *BFM PROGRAMMES*

According to the self-assessment report Advertising and Publicity Studies programme has a sufficient amount of teaching and learning equipment. The library has adequate amount of literature in advertising, marketing and marketing communication to support the studies. According to student feedback the availability of materials has usually not been a problem. The staff members appreciate the possibility to use e-learning opportunities. The somewhat strained financial situation of TU is a challenge for the availability of the resources.

According to the self-assessment report all TU and BFM resources are available also for Public Relations students and that the academic staff has developed their own private professional libraries which are also accessible for the students. Also the modern video and sound equipment in BFM are now available for PR students. The library has adequate amount of literature to support studies in this programme. It was stated in the self-assessment report that the premises are considered to be good work and study environment. The academic staff expressed a wish to focus more on academic research and development.

In the self-assessment report the resources of TU; modern campus, study rooms, offices for staff, number of computer classes and free Wi-Fi, are stated as

strengths for Communication Management programme. Also it is mentioned that the research infrastructure meets the basic requirements for contemporary research. The study centre in the campus includes a modern library with an extensive section of communication literature. In the programme original textbooks are used.

### *SOGOLAS PROGRAMMES*

The Public and Business Management programme enjoys the improved study spaces in the new Astra building. It was stated in the self-assessment report that the premises constitute good work- and study environment. According to a survey by the student council the students consider the study rooms generally comfortable. Many different e-learning applications are in use. The academic staff expressed a wish to focus more on academic research and development.

According to the self-assessment report all the TU resources are available Public Administration students.

### Strengths

Following the panel's investigations, the following issues are commended as particular strengths:

- TU has a new and modern campus and the staff members and students are very pleased with the good physical infrastructure.
- TU also has state of the art library facilities which include extensive selection of on-line databases, computers and rooms for individual or group work.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- Use plagiarism detection software for texts in other languages (in addition to the Estonian one - KRATT)
- Data analysis software is not widely available (throughout the campus for everyone to use).
- The limited resources for the academic staff to focus on academic research and development were mentioned in the interviews. If TU want's to be a research-oriented institution this issue should be systematically addressed and additional resources allocated to research. Both TU and individual researchers could be more active in applying for funding from different sources
- The students pointed out that the new learning technology also has potential for enabling more flexibility in studies. University could take the advantage of using new learning technologies to provide more flexible learning paths to students.

## Teaching and learning

### Standards

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

### Comments

The teaching and learning standards as indicated are mostly met. The learning environment created in TU is considered to be functional. The process of teaching and learning follows the TU Study Regulations. The teaching staff formulates and updates the course descriptions according to the guidelines of TU and this is checked by the study programme administrator and study counsellor. The TU Study Information System ÖIS and Moodle support the development of digital culture. The students' workload is for the most part in accordance with the ECTS credits. Teaching methods and tools are diverse and practical and theoretical components are integrated. Teaching and learning methods include interactive lectures, tutorials of problem-based learning, practical classes, independent work and the teachers' guidance. There is an on-going endeavour to improve the connection between theoretical and skill-based practical work.

Learners are encouraged to be mobile but the student mobility could be improved. Overall assessment methods follow the TU Study Regulations and are set with the learners in mind but further improvements are possible. There are good working relationships between academic staff and students. Students are supported by the study counsellors and the study programme administrator. In case needed there is also professional personnel available to support the well-being of the students. The panel discovered evidence of a variety of appropriate assessment methods being used to evaluate students' achievements. Recognition of prior learning and work experience in TU is regulated by the Study Regulations.

Unfortunately, at the moment of this assessment the development of the student feedback system seems to be in phase of "work in progress" but there is a control and analysis process in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

Some of the students that participated in the interviews were not fully satisfied happy with the methods of delivery, in-class discussions and teaching styles.

Students think that some teachers put too much emphasis on the theoretical aspects in the taught modules with lengthy readings.

#### *BFM PROGRAMMES*

In Advertising and Publicity Studies BA the most important mean to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is considered to be the increased cooperation with employers. The role of audio visual media was also emphasised in the self-assessment report. A variety of teaching and learning methods were mentioned; lectures, seminars, role plays, case work, real business projects, discussions, debates and problem-based learning. Also these types of assessment methods are in use essays, multiple-choice tests, peer assessment, oral exams and presentations. Traineeship or work placement is compulsory in this programme. The feedback and learning outcomes from the work experience could be shared with all the staff members.

Overall feedback from the students is very good. The assessment criteria and requirements as well as the actual workload for students have been the target of some criticism. These issues are taken into close consideration. Also more relevant international partnerships could be established, this would require more projects and courses offered in English.

Internship or work placement is compulsory in Public Relations BA programme as practical approach is mentioned as one of the main strengths of PR studies. The organisational change offered new possibilities for PR programme for. ex. in audio-visual storytelling. The internships are guided by the instructor from school. There are professionals from working life contributing into the programme. There will be a new integrated projects approach in the programme.

Course contents are developed periodically and the staff members meet regularly to discuss the implementation of the programme. Also the theoretical framework and analytical skills of the students need to be maintained at a high level. This has also been a concern from the students stated in the feedback. Changes have been made based on the feedback and a renewed version of the programme started autumn 2016. In regard of this programme international lecturers could be systematically involved in the execution of the programme.

In the self-assessment report it is stated that the operation mode of Communication Management programme is cyclical learning which requires that staff members create and update the course descriptions according to the TU guidelines. A variety of teaching and learning methods were mentioned; interactive lectures, problem-based learning, seminars, practise, independent work and guidance from teachers. Also the assessment of learning outcomes follows the Study Regulations in TU.

The transfer of credits from other universities and recognition of prior learning is working. In general, the students' feedback of the quality of teaching has been positive. The feedback is analysed and the students' concerns are processed. The large size of the study groups has been one concern. Also in the interviews the students raised the issue of unsuitable timetables for students who are working.

More flexibility could be accomplished by increasing the scope of e-learning possibilities.

### *SOGOLAS PROGRAMMES*

The challenges for Public and Business Management BA programme pointed out in the self-assessment report are the ratio between the credit points and actual workload of the students and the student group size. These issues have already been dealt with. Professional work placement is going to be compulsory in this programme. In regard of this programme more professionals from business and international lecturers could be systematically involved in the execution of the programme. About the teaching and learning methods, it was presented during the site visit that contemporary approaches are applied.

According to the self-assessment report in Public Administration MA programme the supervision of master thesis in forms of teacher and peer supervision is emphasised, especially in developing academic skills. However, the drop-out rate is a challenge for students working full-time. The teaching and learning methods in this programme were described in the interviews as traditional. Recognition of prior learning and work experience is in use following the TU Study Regulations. This programme would benefit from professionals from working life and international lecturers being involved in the execution of the programme.

### Strengths:

Following the panel's investigations, the following points are observed as particular strengths:

- Most of the programmes include practical content, also due to the fact that many lecturers are professionally active.
- Most programmes use modern and innovative teaching methods that stimulate student learning.
- Some challenges that are identified in the self-assessment report are already being dealt with and these programmes have good possibilities to improve the situation with distinct measures.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- The new organisational structure was brought up frequently in the interviews and it can be regarded as a challenge or a major opportunity to increase cooperation within TU and its schools.
- Consider a systematic approach to implement diverse, flexible and digital teaching and learning methods across all programmes and courses. These programmes could benefit from knowledge sharing and benchmarking between programmes and between BMF and SOGOLAS schools.
- Teaching staff should consider of embracing some cutting-edge ways to not only motivate students to participate more actively in on-going discussions but to inspire them with cases/examples that are more practical.



- There feedback system is under development and it needs a clear feedback loop.
- Consider introducing systematic feedback policy to students related to formal assessment.
- The practices in teaching and learning could support more explicitly students' individual and social development.
- Higher flexibility in the curriculum would allow the students to follow more individual study paths.
- In some programmes there is a need to unify the student workload: courses with the same ECTS credit amount should require equivalent amounts of student work (including independent study) in line with Tallinn University, national and European standards.
- The use of various ways to increase internationalisation would improve the learning experience and respond to the current needs of the students.
- Drop-out rate should be diminished with active measures. The reasons for drop-outs should be studied, reduced and possibly abolished.

### Teaching staff

#### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

#### Comments

It was reported in the self-assessment that the student feedback in TU is managed with a uniform process. The number of publications per academic staff member in TU is high.

As stated in the self-assessment report at the SOGOLAS study area there is lively national and international cooperation and the collaboration with different institutions even though there is no clear strategy for the development of cooperation. There is also stated a need to develop a strategy for enhancing the long-term academic mobility of teaching staff. The teaching staff of the study

area is involved in professional networks in political and governmental sciences, public bodies and some Estonian higher education institutions.

According to the self-assessment report the BFM study area has regular international cooperation at least with one university. Also the new organisational structure of TU and the reorganisation of new Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School, offers new possibilities for cooperation within the school.

Teaching staff has adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme. The teaching staff is engaged in professional and teaching-skills development. Student feedback is reported to be on a good level.

The teaching staff has some collaboration with in TU and some partners outside of the TU. Foreign members of the staff are few but there are visiting members and practitioners.

Self-assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff could take more into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

#### *BFM PROGRAMMES*

##### *Advertising and Publicity Studies (BA)*

Current programme started in 2002. This is the only programme for advertising in Estonia, and academic staff of the programme forms a centre of excellence of advertising studies in Estonia. It was mentioned in the interviews that this programme has benefitted from the organisational change to be part of the new BFM with respect to more cooperation with other programmes.

Based on the self-assessment report one key performance indicator is to increase the number of members of teaching staff having a PhD from 14 to 20 staff members. Already three members of teaching staff are in the process of acquiring a doctoral degree. Teaching staff from other study programmes are also teaching in this programme and also practitioners have an important role as visiting lecturers. The role of visiting lecturers little due to limited financial resources.

The university supports professional development with internal training. The total number of teaching staff on the study programme in considered sufficient. The student feedback on teaching staff has been good.

##### *Public Relations (BA)*

Programme run since 2011 in Estonian. Currently there are two courses run in English.

According to the self-assessment report the Public relations programme at the TU focuses on the balance of theoretical approaches and practical skills. The core staff, two full time lecturers, of the programme has practical experience from the PR field and almost all are currently working in the field which supports their

professional development. In addition to these lecturers there are other TU lecturers teaching in the programme and also visiting staff running courses.

There is some early stages cooperation with a similar programme in University of Tartu and some teaching and research cooperation with international partners. There is also cooperation with national PR Association.

#### *Communication Management (MA)*

This is the only programme in this study programme group at TU which is run in English and is tuition-based. The programme has a special focus on Intercultural Communication.

In regard to the self-assessment report all members of the staff are engaged in research and international activities despite the heavy work load. Development of the staff members' professional, pedagogical and academic skills is supported by TU. The feedback from students is positive. Most lecturers in the programme have at least a MA degree and some also PhD in Communication or Linguistics, or are currently enrolled into the PhD study. The number of teaching staff seems to be adequate.

#### *SOGOLAS PROGRAMMES*

##### *Public and Business Management (BA)*

Programme run since 2002 in Estonian. Teaching staff seems very qualified; most of the lecturers have PhD degree. Teaching staff is engaged in research and participate in international conferences. It seems that there might be too many students per staff member which might cause problems on the long run. The role of visiting lecturers little due to limited financial resources. The heavy workload of teaching staff was pointed out.

##### *Public Administration (MA)*

Programme run since 1996 in Estonian. In the light of the information provided the teaching staff is qualified and most of the lecturers have PhD and most of the staff members are involved in research activities. The number of staff members was reported to be high and despite this there seems to be a challenge with the work overload and fragmentation. Also due to the reported limited resources the number of international visiting lectures is low.

#### Strengths

- Qualified and research oriented staff.
- Staff members are involved in research projects and have connections to work life.
- Some pedagogical training is available.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- A more systematic institutional support for development of learning and teaching could be adopted.

- Heavy workload and the need to work in other jobs puts academic staff additional strain.
- The challenge of limited financial resources was brought up in several connections, especially utilizing international networks and partners. Also the students expressed interest in courses in English and more connections to work life.
- Increasingly strengthen the connections to work life and create systematic processes that benefit both parties.

## Students

### Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

### Comments

The above standards applicable to the domain of 'Students' are all met and in some cases even exceeded. Entry requirements for the programmes such as written tests are designed to select motivated and serious candidates. Admission numbers have varied by different years and by different study programmes, however, the most important point to note is the decreasing tendency for new students in the past few years. According to the self-assessment report, this tendency can be seen in the overall admission numbers at TU, but also at other universities across the country due to negative demographic trends. Nonetheless, getting admission is still competitive because of limited seats (i.e. 1:6). During the panel visit, the panel observed that most of the students are highly motivated and committed to their studies.

During the last four academic years, a total of 138 bachelor students were admitted for the four bachelor programmes of which 131 graduated (94%). Currently 94 students are studying in these four bachelor programs. There were 115 students admitted of which 85 graduated in the two master programmes and currently there are 73 students studying in both programmes. The drop-out rates appear to be a concern for the TU. For example, in Advertising and Publicity Studies the percentage of graduates within the nominal period of study in the past three years is 57%. Institution management and the academic staff do constant monitoring of educational attainment and counselling of students to improve graduation numbers within the nominal period. The main reason of drop-outs appears to be difficulties in combining study and work in parallel. TU has taken initiatives to raise the level of admitted students by engaging with key

stakeholders e.g. Student Academy courses, Open Academy cooperating with schools. It is good to see that students represent in the institution decision-making processes at different managerial levels such as university level, academic unit level and sub-unit level.

Students and members of the alumni told the panel that the information mentioned on the university website and promises made at the time of admission were not fully met. For example, the availability of subjects and timetable, promised days and hours of study were not as per the information mentioned.

### Strengths

Given the panel's investigations, the following areas are commended as particular strengths:

- Students are in general very satisfied with their studies and enthusiastic about their programmes of study and TU. They are also satisfied with the preparation the programmes give them for future study and/or work.
- Students mentioned that some measures such as the introduction to EU institutions, video lecturing, interactive and analytical methods have improved their knowledge and student experience at the TU.
- TU has an effective counselling service through specialised study counsellors. They usually monitor students' progress and contact them in the event of noticeable deviations to support in-time completion of the chosen programme.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- According to students, the panel met with during the panel visit, module/course feedback questionnaire is obligatory for most of the study programmes at TU. Students must fill-in the feedback forms otherwise they cannot register for the modules for the subsequent semester/academic year. The panel considers that this method of feedback collection might not help in collecting useful data. TU should consider collecting feedback through acceptable sampling techniques such as self-selection.
- The panel recommends that TU considers communication with the students and should try to communicate as transparently as possible to avoid any confusion and disappointment if the actual implementation of the programme does not match information given at the time of enrolment. Keep the official website up-to-date for current and prospective students, and other external stakeholders, such as employers and alumni.
- It seems that there is a limited feedback provided to the students for exam grading. Some of the assessment methods are difficult to understand and very little or no feedback makes results difficult to understand for the students. The panel recommends for a clear assessment and grading strategy and this should be shared with students for each programme covering assessment information for all taught

- modules. In particular, there should be some opportunities for the students to discuss their grades with the teachers concerned.
- TU has good collaboration with more than 20 partner universities all around the globe for international student mobility and Erasmus programmes. Unfortunately, student mobility is not commendable. There is very small percentage of students (only twenty-three students in the last three years) went abroad to complete part of their studies in a partner university. According to students, one of the main reasons is the lack of financial resources, as the scholarship does not cover all expenses related to studies abroad. The panel recommends that university should take measures to improve international student mobility and think of alternative ways to support students.
  - Alumni members and employers' representatives think that university has some good connections & network and due to small size, there is personal connection among staff and students. However, they suggested that TU should try to offer more international study programmes. The panel agrees with the suggestion and furthermore recommends more co-operation on international level, future research and student dissertations should be related to real-life cases. TU should also consider on developing some key managerial and critical thinking skills.
  - University management should consider the timetable planning to accommodate all students especially those combining study and work on full-time basis to avoid or at least lower the high dropout rates.

### 3. Assessment report of SPG at Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre

#### 3.1. Introduction

Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT) is a public university in Estonia founded in 1919. It is a leading institution of music and theatre education in Estonia. Students can specialize in all major fields of music and theatre in Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral programmes – from organ and harpsichord to jazz and traditional music. There are nearly 700 students currently studying in the academy.

Master programme in Cultural Management is a joint programme of Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and Estonian Business School that was established in 2002. Taught in English, it currently admits 18 students every other year.

Statistical data is the following:

| Academic year | Number of admitted students | Number of students | Number of graduates | Number of dropout cases |
|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 11/12         | -                           | 22                 | 6                   | 3                       |
| 12/13         | 18                          | 33                 | 7                   | 4                       |
| 13/14         | -                           | 23                 | 5                   | 3                       |
| 14/15         | 18                          | 33                 | 3                   | 5                       |
| 15/16         | -                           | 23                 | 12                  | -                       |

*Source: The EAMT Self-Assessment Report*

#### 3.2. General findings and recommendations at the study programme group level

The joint MA is a successful collaboration producing highly engaged and enthusiastic cultural managers and entrepreneurs serving the Estonian cultural industries. The strong international focus of the programme guarantees a market advantage in Estonia. Both students and alumni indicated a high level of satisfaction with the overall programme. The teaching staff comes across as enthusiastic, efficient and highly motivated.

Employers and other stakeholders commented on the quality of the MA graduates as exceptional and outstanding, combining the strength of both collaborating institutions.

As a result, the MA in Cultural management creates a positive academic community in which: (i) the standards of higher education are all met; (ii) staff and students form an engaged academic community; and (iii) staff demonstrate very high levels of commitment to their work. A number of recommendations can

also be made to enhance the programme structure and delivery. These are discussed in the sections below but summarized here.

The most important issue to address is the future strategic development of the programme to ensure the sustainability and long-term commitment of the programme in the cultural and academic sector of Estonian society. A clear mission broken down into objectified achievable targets will allow it to meet growing pressures from international markets and address the need to specialize further and adapt curriculum development accordingly. For example: a consistent approach to internationalization (what does this mean in an Estonian context?) could feed further into all areas of academic study, addressing the need for cultural management in the Baltic States. The programme has the potential to become a market leader in the Baltic region but further market analysis is recommended also for outside the Baltic region.

A lot of improvements have been achieved to make the collaboration between the two schools work efficiently but it could be enhanced by utilizing more programme-specific partnerships while working across the range of business subjects that EBS has to offer, such as innovation and entrepreneurship. At the same time EAMT could offer cultural subjects to EBS mainstream students, for example performance-related presentation training. While the engagement with teaching-focused networks has produced some exceptional results, collaboration with research-focused networks will enhance curriculum development further.

A general recommendation would be to re-think the number of modules and their ECTS credit structure. The use of single digit credits can result in over-weighting and the panel would suggest working with two-digit credit modules only.

Innovation in teaching and learning should be supported at a systematic level that offers guidance and advice for all teaching staff members on a regular and easily accessible manner. A revision of the strategic approach could also include streamlining the workload of staff members and considering equal opportunity measures as general guidelines of good practice.

Staff recognized and acted on the high dropout rate of the programme and the low rate of finishing students (between 5 and 7 per year) within the two-year time frame has improved in 2015/15 to 12 students out of 23. This is clearly not-just a programme-specific issue. However, further work is required to ensure (e.g. develop an incentive system) that students are motivated to finish their degree within the given time limit of two years despite their ongoing work commitments.

### 3.3. Strengths and areas for improvement of study programmes by assessment areas

#### Study programme and study programme development

##### Standards

- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and



- professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
  - ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
  - ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
  - ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

### Comments

The standards of the domain of 'study programme development' mentioned above are all met, showing the application of a variety of good practice examples throughout the programme. The panel can confirm that both structure and content of the MA correspond to the Estonian Standard of Higher Education, the Curriculum standards of the EBS as well as EAMT. The panel saw evidence that learning outcomes and learning objectives (interview and seminar attendance) are implemented with great care and that the administration acted fast to eliminate issues of concern when necessary. A structured exchange of knowledge, information and feedback between students, employers, alumni and stakeholders forms part of on-going curriculum development, ensuring that labour market needs are met and contribution to the development of the field of cultural management are guaranteed. Processes and procedures for curriculum development and quality assurance are in place, implemented and monitored.

### Strengths

According to the panel investigations, the following areas have been identified as strengths:

- All stakeholders, employers, alumni, staff and students speak very highly of the quality of the programme and they regard the programme as a leader in Estonia.
- The curriculum provides a solid grounding in the field and ensures that the practical and theoretical balance is achieved as indicated by the overall programme objectives (self-assessment report: 14). In particular, the practical skills as well as reflective attitude of students has been valued by employers.
- Development of the MAPSI module as part of an international collaborative initiative that defines and sets high quality standards in curriculum development for other programmes at European level.
- The programme has more applications than places and successful applicants feel privileged to be able to join the programme.
- The curriculum is designed and implemented in the English language and is currently the only programme of this kind in Estonia that shows this commitment in terms of internationalisation.

- The programme offers a flexible student-led placement abroad and this further enhances the international outlook as designed in curriculum development.
- The programme design takes into consideration the nature of the students as working professionals and supports work-related coursework.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made to enhance the study programme:

- A streamlined mission should be produced that sets clear targets and helps to govern the future development of the programme while utilising opportunities and resources that are already in place.
  - A clear understanding of what internationalisation means in regard to curriculum development and what the programme wants to achieve in relation to an internationally trained labour force in the cultural industries.
  - The role and position of research as an equal part of the curriculum design could be strengthened in order to foster critical thinking skills. If doctoral studies are to be developed as part of the strategic plan, the associated research community will provide further opportunities (and also offers teaching opportunities for doctoral students). Placements and internships could be designed with a research-focused approach. This could take the form of including research components into the curriculum that provide value for money for cultural organisations.
  - The team working on the MA programme are great collaborators but a more specialised approach to collaboration could be achieved by utilising existing expertise, e.g. in the musicology department of EAMT in relation to doctoral studies and in EBS with the entrepreneurial study programme related to academic studies in cultural entrepreneurship.
- A re-thinking of the ECTS credit interpretation will streamline the curriculum further and make it more compatible with international partners. For example: Reducing the single digit credit offers and addressing the content and weighting of credits in general to ensure equal distribution of student workload.
- To increase validation of the degree internationally and to ensure a high standard of English on the programme, the introduction of a formal English language test (IELTS) could ensure greater credibility and certification of applicants in the command of English.

#### Resources

##### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they

- are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

### Comments

Overall resources are adequate and the panel found that the physical and technical resources available for the MA programme are of a good standard. Both institutions provide flexible accommodation for academic and support staff in technologically well-equipped rooms. Lecture rooms are spacious and in EAMT lecture rooms are soundproofed. Staff and students are generally satisfied with their working conditions. There is room for improvement when it comes to study information systems and students and staff wish for a more permanent lecture home (dedicated seminar room) for the MA in general.

All institutions work within financial constraints but financial resources should be allocated according to strategic planning. For example, if internationalisation remains a priority, resources should be allocated to support international work of staff and students, e.g. allow staff to travel abroad to attend international conferences and provide additional scholarships to cover non-Erasmus, including costs.

### Strengths

Following the panel's investigations, the following points are commended as particular strengths:

- Both libraries are well-equipped but in particular at EAMT the physical and electronic resources offer students and staff access to international journals, which remain essential for academic programmes at this level. In the future this area may require particular attention since the provision of electronic references is changing fast, as indicated during the interviews.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- There was very little evidence that the programme is marketed abroad successfully and it is too early to say if the 2016 social media campaign has translated into applications. It remains important that the strengths of the programme are highlighted in the marketing materials and that suitable media are chosen to reach potential applicants. Perhaps further resources would need to be allocated to achieve greater visibility in international markets.
- Despite the fact that the libraries remain well-equipped further opportunities should be explored to provide additional and not necessarily expensive study materials for students. Examples could include podcasts, documentaries and open lectures from other universities abroad.

- Strictly speaking, the production of resources in the Estonian language might be a good tool to publicise the programme in Estonia but it does little to attract other English-speaking applicants. Additionally, the publications (e.g. Managing the Arts) that are produced in both Estonian and English language will mainly be useful for the Estonian market. Therefore, further resources allocated to translating key-texts should be revisited.
- It is evident that individual (guest) lecturers recommend resources to the library but over the years some of the resources have become out-dated and require replacement as the panel's visit to the library indicated.

### Teaching and learning

#### Standards

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

#### Comments

The teaching and learning standards as indicated above are met and a variety of good practice examples are evident. The needs of individual learners and their social development are paramount and staff and students are complementary of each other and their work. Student learning is well-managed and monitored. Lecturers use a variety of methods in order to meet learners' needs. There is an on-going concern to improve the connectivity between theoretical and skill-based practical work. Learners are encouraged to take up study and work opportunities abroad but student mobility could be improved. Overall assessment methods are set with the learners in mind but further improvements are possible.

#### Strengths

Given the panel's investigations, the following areas are commended as particular strengths:

- The programme is designed, taught and validated to support learners' needs. This is evident in a number of good practice examples:
  - The study programme is organised to accommodate full-time employment of current students

- Study programme and programme planning support is given in individual face to face meetings between learners and the programme co-ordinator and academic staff.
- Small classes allow for inter-student interaction and individual exposure and support of the development of communication skills.
- Team and group work has been highlighted as a particularly effective learning tool among learners.
- The above-mentioned MAPSI initiative compiles a variety of learning methods (e.g. case studies) that are excellent and act as best-practice in cultural management education.
- The programme responds to student feedback and acts with immediate effect to ensure learners' satisfaction. For example, it has introduced a MA dissertation seminar to prevent and decrease the drop-out rate at the later stages of the programme and to engage learners earlier on in these kinds of large scale research and writing assessments.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of teaching and learning:

- Consider ways in which the best-practise example of MAPSI could be extended and rolled out to all modules that are offered on the MA programme. For example in reference to the alignment of teaching methods with programme content and the use of e-learning across modules.
- Ensure clarity of marking and assessment criteria. Re-think the 100% attendance assessment criteria for the first semester in order to ensure individual learning progress throughout the two-year programme. The current high-pass rate of nearly 100% (as referenced during the interviews with students) indicates that little incentive is given for students to want to do well.
- Provide a consistent support system (see also general recommendation) that ensures learners can detect plagiarism in advance of submission of coursework.
- Timetabling is produced well in advance but it does not always fit with the needs of cultural managers who are not freelance and rely on set working hours during the day and/or in the evening.
- Provide a systematic approach to feedback that is traceable for all collaborators in addition to the feedback loop that is currently practised and acted on.

#### Teaching staff

##### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.

- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

### Comments

The standards as indicated under 'Teaching Staff' above are all met. The programme runs with a mix of staff including a large number of guest lecturers from abroad and academic staff from both partner organisations. In 2016 a new full-time academic staff member (0.9 FTE) started dedicated work on the programme and on overseeing current curricula developments. In total there are 25 members of staff listed in the appendix of the self-evaluation report and 10 of them hold a PhD. The guest lecturers are recruited according to their expertise. The teaching team is aware that in the future they could make better use of alumni doctoral students to enhance a more research-led approach to teaching. Overall, the variety of lecturers provides a holistic approach to cultural management teaching and exposes learners to a variety of methods, backgrounds and personalities that are all well-established in the cultural sector. The student feedback indicated that the teaching staff creates a good learning atmosphere on the programme. All lecturers presented at interviews were highly motivated, engaged and eager to develop their field of expertise as well as their pedagogical skills. However, a consistent and strategic approach to teacher qualification and continuing professional development remains an area for further improvement.

### Strengths

Given the panel's investigations, the following areas are commended as particular strengths:

- The staff is very committed, motivated and enthusiastic in providing a very good learning atmosphere and study environment.
- The level of professional experience is extremely high and it gives the programme a competitive advantage in the Estonian HE landscape.
- The collaboration of the teaching staff with a variety of partners in HE and cultural industries at national and international level adds to the uniqueness of this programme and allows it to stand out as exceptional among other similar programmes in the Baltic States.
- Collaboration between EAMT and EBS seems to be working well and benefits both parties.
- Systematic process for managing feedback.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- **Workload and training:** To facilitate equal measurement and distribution of workload among all members of staff, the panel recommends investigating if staff would benefit from the introduction of workload allocation models. This could be coupled with a systematic approach to ensure that all staff members participate in further pedagogical and professional training, which would enhance the student experience and benefit the development of the HE sector in Estonia in general.
- **Research and scholarship:** To encourage and support staff in the production of scholarly work. This could include the development and the writing of textbooks as well as primary and secondary research that will eventually develop into a research-focused approach to teaching and validate the academic experience further. Also organising seminars on the research topics of teaching staff might offer one way to strengthen the research activities. The number of staff that holds a doctorate or is currently involved in doctoral studies has increased but further development of research-active staff is recommended to ensure the sustainability of the programme in the longer term. Both the quality and quantity of research outputs could be increased. One option would be to offer fellowships for early-career researchers to develop the building up of the research community over time.
- **Internationalisation:** Since this is one of the key-features of the programme it requires on-going attention. The programme works with international partners that developed via the various contacts and memberships of organisations such as ENCATC as well as exchange contacts that the EBS has established over the years. However, attention should be directed to those partners that offer a seamless student exchange and guarantee benefits to both staff and students. Staff should be encouraged to undertake research and scholarly work abroad and not just rely on incoming international staff. Collaboration with institutions of a similar profile such as the Institut für Kultur-und Medienmanagement in Hamburg (<http://kmm-hamburg.de/institut/>) might provide a rich source of experience and expertise as well as foster student exchange.
- More use of digital opportunities could offer new possibilities for guest lecturing.
- Integrate the Cultural Management students more with students in other programme in EAMT; maybe joint studies and projects.

### Students

#### Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content,

- form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
  - ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
  - ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

### Comments

The standards applicable for the section 'Students' have all been met and in many cases exceeded. The students we met were motivated, capable and enthusiastic about the MA. While the drop-out rate has come down in recent years (as indicated in the self-assessment report) it remains a matter of concern and further improvements are recommended. Since this is an international programme, students are offered opportunities to study abroad. In addition an international placement scheme and numerous guest lecturers from abroad provide further international exposure. Employment rates are high, which reflects partly on the well-designed flexibility of the programme. Alumni are generally pleased with the quality of their study and reported a long-term effect on their professional behaviour.

### Strengths

Given the panel's investigations, the following areas are commended as particular strengths:

- Students and Alumni show plenty of initiative, partly outside of their studies (e.g. development of professional body that represents arts managers in Estonia).
- There is a consolidated student interest in developing a PhD programme under the leadership of the MA core staff to support further learning and research opportunities.
- Students are well integrated into the labour market during and after their study with many being in full-time employment or working as free-lancers as is typical for this industry.
- The committee noted a strong sense of 'community' among the students and Alumni.
- Pastoral care of the students is extensive and exceptional with both core academic staff and the dedicated administrator being available and flexible in their time allocation to meet students' needs.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Given the panel's investigations, the following recommendations are made for the enhancement of study programmes:

- Further attention needs to be paid to the drop-out rate. In the self-evaluation report the drop-out rate is considered as meeting the institution's benchmark. The rate has improved over the years but with just under 30% in 2016 there is room to lower this rate further in coming years. As mentioned above the committee recommends developing further



- incentives to finish the MA within the time frame of two years. This could be achieved with greater integration of student work environment into the dissertation-focused research (e.g. action research projects that benefit all stakeholders (student, employer and research community))
- To address greater integration and collaboration of two student cohorts in joint classes with the partner organization EBS. Despite the fact that the collaboration between partner organisations is fruitful at management level (regular exchange, effective management) this also needs to be integrated into the creative content that is delivered in the classroom.
  - To increase optional study of currently 5 credits to a higher proportion in order to meet students' needs to specialise further during their studies.

To strengthen English language development, the panel would recommend the adoption of a formal English language test (e.g. IELTS) as obligatory for entry. The benchmark of the entry score should be above 5.5 to meet international standards.