

## **Assessment Report**

# Business and Administration

Estonian University of Life Sciences

Estonian Entrepreneurship University  
of Applied Sciences

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 aim of the assessment team was the evaluation of the Study Programme Group (SPG) of Business and Administration in two higher education institutions: Estonian University of Life Sciences and Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences.

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:

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<b>Anne Perkiö</b>	Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Finland
<b>Markus Breuer</b>	Professor, SRH University Heidelberg, Germany
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The assessment process was coordinated by Karin Laansoo (EKKA).

After the preparation phase, the work of the assessment team in Estonia started on Monday, 24 April 2017, 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 the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group at the two 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.

During the following days, meetings were held with the representatives of the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU; Tuesday 25 April) and Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences (EUAS; Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 April). 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 Friday, 28 April, the team held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report was agreed and findings of team meetings were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report. This work was executed in a cooperative way and the members of the team intensively discussed their individual views on the relevant topics.

In the following two sections, the assessment team summarise their general findings, conclusions and recommendations which are relevant across the whole SPG. In so doing, the team provides an external and objective perspective on the programmes and the contexts within which they are delivered. Ultimately, 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 formulating its recommendations, however, the assessment team has not evaluated the financial feasibility associated with their implementation.

## **General findings and recommendations**

Based on study of the self-evaluation documents and interviews the study visit evaluation panel (henceforth 'the panel') conducted with senior managers, teaching staff, students, alumni and employers, there are a series of findings, major challenges and recommendations common to both institutions.

1). Findings which can be considered as positive factors in both institutions include:

- popular and practically oriented study programmes
- high levels of graduate employability
- generally good resources
- the use of a variety of appropriate teaching and assessment methods
- dedicated, well-qualified, caring staff
- flexible programme delivery modes

- high levels of support from stakeholders
- generally well-motivated students.

In addition, there was evidence that both HEIs were aware of the need to develop and deepen internationalization and a desire to be involved in this process.

2). The major challenges facing both institutions are:

- responding to changes in the economic, technological and social environments
- a declining number of students due primarily to demographic factors in Estonia
- realistic planning for the future funding environment
- a continuing gap between intentions and practice in the implementation of active learning approaches
- the high percentage of students striving to integrate study with working full-time
- internationalizing the curriculum and raising staff and student mobility
- responding quickly and accurately to market signals
- continuously adapting to prepare students for the local and global labour markets
- staff recruitment and succession planning.

3). Following on from these findings and challenges, the general recommendations for EMU and EUAS are to:

- develop strategies to address the implications of demographic change in Estonia and the related decline in potential student numbers
- adopt/develop new strategies and technologies to improve student completion rates
- strengthen pedagogical development to close the gap between intention and practice in outcome based learning based on active learning principles
- better prepare students for the global labour market through full internationalisation of the curricula, materials and staffing
- make fuller use of state-of-the-art learning materials available as MOOCs
- strengthen staffing recruitment processes and succession planning.

# 1. Assessment report of the study programmes at Estonian University of Life Sciences

## 1.1. Introduction

Eesti Maaülikool, the Estonian University of Life Sciences, founded in 1951, is registered as a public legal entity and acts according to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the Universities Act, the [Statutes of EMU](#) and other legislative acts. The main field of activity of EMU is research and studies concerning bio-economy. The EMU is one of the top 100 universities in the world in the field of agriculture and forestry, ranked 51 to 100. The *Thomson Reuters Essential Science Indicators* database places the EMU into the top 1% most cited research facilities in the world in the field of plant and animal science, as well as environment and ecology.

Through its 'Green University' ethos and strategy, EMU promotes an environmentally friendly way of thinking and the smart and balanced management of rural life through research-based education. Further information on the mission, vision and values can be found in [EMU Development Plan 2016-2025](#), which was adopted at the end of 2015 together with an Action Plan for the coming five years. In Estonia, its USP (Unique Selling Proposition) is the focus on the rural sector in all aspects of science, society, professional practice and economic activity. The general objectives of the Institutes have not undergone any dramatic changes. EMU as a whole offers a comprehensive value-chain approach to the bio-economy sectors.

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences (IESS) is responsible for well-rounded education in rural economics and management based on research and development. The mission of the Institute is to contribute to the sustainable development of Estonia, offering the society new insights into rural economy and rural development by preparing scientists and specialists in this area and ensuring the society high-level consultation and counselling services.

### **The strategic objectives of the Institute are to:**

#### **In research**

- develop and expand international cooperation;
- increase the share of revenues from research and development activities;
- ensure the next generation of economists;
- increase the visibility of research activities, both in Estonia as well as internationally.

#### **In teaching**

- ensure the development of the next generation of academic staff;
- prepare professionals with a competitive edge in the labour market;
- increase teaching quality and efficiency.

#### **In development and counselling activities**

- develop agriculture- and rural economy-related counselling activities;
- integrate with the cooperation networks involved in research, development and counselling at the European Union level;

- enhance cooperation with the alumni of the Institute.

The Institute comprises of five departments:

- Department of Agrarian Economics and Marketing;
- Department of Accounting and Finance;
- Department of Business Informatics and Econometrics;
- Department of Rural Management, Co-operation and Rural Sociology;
- Department of Rural Economy Research.

**TABLE 1. DYNAMICS OF THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS DURING THE LAST FIVE YEARS**

Curriculum	Level	Academic year	Admission	Graduates	Dropout number	Total number of students (01.01.16)	Outgoing mobility
Rural Entrepreneurship and Financial Management (371)	BA	2015/2016	92	74	86	385	6
		2014/2015	92	60	93	434	
		2013/2014	132	56	132	509	1
		2012/2013	142	62	117	530	1
		2011/2012	130	97	115	578	1
Accounting and Financial Management (412)	MA	2015/2016	35	20	28	139	
		2014/2015	37	22	17	133	
		2013/2014	40	6	23	118	
		2012/2013	33	10	21	113	
		2011/2012	21	18	14	113	
Economics and Entrepreneurship (414)	MA	2015/2016	37	19	20	103	
		2014/2015	38	18	28	104	
		2013/2014	40	18	24	106	
		2012/2013	29	18	13	99	1
		2011/2012	38	17	9	95	

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

All the programmes under review (BA in Rural Entrepreneurship and Financial Management, MA in Accounting and Financial Management, and MA in Economics and Entrepreneurship), are discussed together in this section of the report. The rationale for this is that, with one exception (the BA students), each of the groups of programme managers, teaching staff, students, alumni and employers the panel interviewed during the study visit, contained representatives of the three programmes.

1.2.1. Rural Entrepreneurship and Financial Management (Bachelor's studies);  
Accounting and Financial Management (Master's studies) and;  
Economics and Entrepreneurship (Master's studies)

**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 panel confirms that EMU/IESS meets study programme and programme development standards, and is compliant with all legislative requirements. This is achieved within the framework of the «Green University» concept and follows the principles of sustainability in every-day life and in developing the infrastructure, including renovation and construction (self-evaluation report, p. 6). This approach was underlined in many of the interviews conducted during the expert panel's visit (e. g. by university management, program heads, lecturers). Stakeholders call "Green" a USP of EMU and a red line in the university strategy.

Management is regarded as one substantial part of the Green University concept since business administration and economics cover all parts of the value chain "from field to fork" and thus, are included in every study programme at EMU. Business and management is not only used to diversify the university's product portfolio (i. e. study programmes).

Different parts of the study programmes taught at EMU form a coherent whole. The structure and content of modules and courses in the study programs support

achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.

The modernization and development of the curriculum is the responsibility of the curriculum leader (self-evaluation report, p. 20). Students also give feedback on the courses via ÖIS after the completion of the course. The curriculum leader keeps an eye on the feedback and the feedback is discussed with the lecturers in person, if necessary (self-evaluation report, p. 22). Moreover, the Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) and the Quality Assessment Working Group of the Institute contribute to the development of the curricula (self-evaluation report, p. 19).

According to the interviews the labour market has changed significantly since 2005. Sustainability now plays a major role in all kinds of (agriculture related) business. The change in the curricula was demand driven and maintains the employability of the graduates on a high level. This is in line with the self-evaluation report that provides additional information on curricula changes on page 20.

Internships play an important role in helping the students to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the curricula and to keep in contact with the labour market. The students' ability to fully understand the agriculture value chain and their impact is supported by teaching courses on business ethics and philosophy.

### Strengths

- The combination of courses in theoretical and applied economics provides the students with an education that enables them to work as economic specialists in enterprises, development projects, local governments, and government authorities, as well as the knowledge and skills required for setting up and managing a business or an enterprise (self-evaluation report, p. 19).
- In the interviews all stakeholder groups expressed their very high commitment towards EMU. Especially lecturers and employers/partners convinced the expert panel of their deep trust in the institution (e.g. calling EMU "our university").
- EMU points out its "good balance between the theoretical basis and practice in the curricula" (self-evaluation report, p. 23). The value of this balance was confirmed during the interviews, e.g. by students appreciating the practical approach of the lecturers. Interviewees assessed other institutions (like Tartu University) to be less practical. Overall, the connection between business administration/economics and knowledge in green economy enables students and graduates to understand the complexity of the agricultural sector.
- Students' feedback to lectures can be provided in various forms (e.g. by talking to the lecturer, written form). Many students obviously take this chance and appreciate that their individual feedback is considered and leads to changes in the way lectures are structured.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The expert panel was not able to gain a precise definitions/idea of what the "Green University" concept means since different interviewees expressed subjective impressions. The concept might be seen as some kind of umbrella covering all study programmes, research areas, etc. and thus, might be regarded as a strength of the institution. However, university management should ensure that (potential) students do not get a wrong impression of the concept and its implications on the curricula. Especially those students (and applicants) having no agricultural background should have a clear idea of the vision and its impact on the curricula.
- During the interviews the expert panels noticed that EMU plans a change of its academic structure. Future framework should consider 22 chairs which will act as subject leaders. Before the implementation of this new setting the role of the chairs should be clearly defined (if this has not already happened). Role descriptions should include but not be limited to the chair's role in curriculum changes and the development of research areas.
- During the interviews some students expressed their interest in full-time programmes (at master's level). Therefore, expert panel recommends to reconsider the decision to abolish those programmes. Furthermore, as there are many students in full time employment during their studies, the panel also encourages the university to further adapt study and delivery modes to the needs of the increasing number of students who work full-time.
- According to the interviews the differentiation between general modules and specialization modules follows the idea that general modules provide generic knowledge whereas specialization modules focus on agricultural economics. This is not always reflected in the module descriptions/subjects. E. g. the self-evaluation report names "basic finance" and "principles of marketing" as parts of the speciality module in the curriculum of Rural Entrepreneurship and Financial Management" (p. 38 f.). Therefore, expert panel recommends checking the module description to ensure a stringent wording.
- In the interviews curriculum development was described a continuous process which is in line with the self-evaluation report (p. 23). The responsibility for study programme development lies with the institutes. There is no responsibility at the level of the university management. Curriculum development considers the ideas of different stakeholder groups including but not limited to lecturers, employers, and students. The expert panel understood that the implementation of changes follows a combined top-down and bottom-up approach and that the curriculum committee meets several times a year. If this has not been done so far we recommend to include student's ideas systematically in those meetings (e. g. by nominating a student representative from each study programme).
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- During the interviews students indicated the importance of social skills for the employability. That is in line with one area of improvement indicated by EMU in its self-evaluation report (p. 23). The expert panel values EMU's efforts to strengthen student's competences. Anyway, the implementation of additional/new types of examinations might be useful. Further discussion with employers and professionals in university didactics might be beneficial for all stakeholders.
- The value of internships on the Bachelor's level is restricted to 5 ECTS, and on the Master's level to 3 ECTS (self-evaluation report, p. 21) which does not enable students to do a long-term internship which, students reported, would be of more practical value to them. The panel recommends that this be an objective for the next cycle of curriculum review.
- In the course of the interviews several potential development areas for the current curricula were mentioned. These include:
  - Courses on sales and sales management
  - Entrepreneurship courses
  - Project management courses
  - Additional courses in English to improve especially student's fluency (supporting an area of improvement that was identified in the self-evaluation report as well, p. 23).

## 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

Based on the self-evaluation, visit discussions with staff, students and alumni, and a tour of the premises and facilities, the panel affirms that resource standards are met in all areas and are exceeded in some. There are nevertheless some aspects of provision which could be further improved. Resource planning is good.

### Strengths

- It was explained to the panel that financing is stable because of block allocations through the state budget, so enabling resource planning.
- The self evaluation shows an increase in foreign student numbers (currently from 22 countries), which means a growing additional income stream.
- Discussions with senior managers revealed that financing for ongoing refurbishment is included in annual budgets. There was a major reconfiguration and upgrading of the IESS building 10 years ago.
- The self evaluation and the panel tour showed that the library is adequately stocked with hard copies of textbooks and has invested in a comprehensive range of electronic databases.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Given the change in teaching and learning techniques to more group work and e-learning, students mentioned that the configuration of current room space needs further refitting. The panel's discussions with staff showed that they were aware of this issue and that there were plans for more refits.
- Meetings with students suggested that if there are many users at once, then the wi-fi does not always work properly. The panel recommends further

investment in wi-fi capacities as well as more awareness raising about the different wifi networks available to overcome these problems.

- While the SIS system meets current needs, it needs new investment so there can be better monitoring student progress through e.g. the adoption of a 'traffic lights' system as used at EUAS, and be more closely integrated with the Moodle platform (see recommendation in 'teaching and learning' below).

## 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

Taking into account the self-evaluation document and the findings from the visit, the panel confirms that the programmes under review are broadly compliant with EKKA standards of teaching and learning. Supporting statements and data in the self-evaluation, the evidence from IESS teaching staff, managers and students provided a very positive picture of the learning environment, of active teaching styles, of flexible modes of delivery (i.e. the distance mode), and of openness to continuous pedagogical development.

The self evaluation provides details of the support structures for developing teaching and learning techniques, examples of active learning and appropriate assessments, staff and student mobility networks, and available e-learning platforms and systems. There are nevertheless areas for improvement.

### Strengths

- The self-evaluation shows that there is extensive use of the Moodle and Study Information System (OIS) platforms, the KRATT plagiarism detection system, and there has been investment in the EDUROAM network enabling students to access learning resources freely in partner institutions.
- Feedback data from students shows positive scores for the structuring of the learning experience, the development of soft skills, the achievement of learning outcomes, and advice and support for their studies, particularly at Masters' level. These findings were very positively echoed in the visit meetings with students.
- Supporting claims in the self-evaluation document, students reported that those elements of teaching which drew on practical examples and real-world experiences involving practitioners from outside were particularly appreciated, and that this was a strength of their programmes.
- Evidence from meetings with staff showed there is a varied and sophisticated use of different tools and techniques to assess different types of learning outcomes, examples given included report writing, problem solving exercises, presentations, regular diagnostic class tests, feedback sessions.
- Despite some issues identified in the panel's meetings with all groups (see section above on the curriculum, and below 'Areas for Improvement'), the internship programme is seen as a very positive element of the teaching and learning process by students.
- The self-evaluation identifies practically focussed staff-student research projects which can be and are used to enrich and enhance the student experience individually and collectively.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Whilst welcoming the recent improvements that have resulted from a more activist approach by the new ERASMUS co-ordinator in the IESS (e.g. international week, information seminars), and the strengthening of financial support for exchanges, the self-evaluation and evidence from the visit indicate continuing low rates of staff and student mobility internationally. Given the well-recognised problems in raising the outgoing mobility of EMU students, a renewed focus on bringing in staff exchanges from other countries and for longer periods, attracting more foreign students with courses taught in English, internationalising the curriculum content significantly, extending the use of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), and video teaching with existing and new international partners, are other ways of achieving the goal of greater internationalisation.
- Evidence the panel heard from students suggests that despite the commitment to a learning outcomes based philosophy and to styles of active learning (many good examples of which were cited), there are still pockets of didactic teaching where there is little opportunity for student engagement. The staff development process needs to seek new ways to engage those teachers clinging on to these techniques e.g. through the extension of peer

review through a 'buddy' system, the sharing of the best practices of gifted teachers (perhaps through video recordings), and the use of appropriate MOOCs as a quick means of improving the learning experience.

- As the self-evaluation notes, the OIS system needs modernising and improving, and when doing so, attention should be given to areas of overlap and confusion which may result from using both OIS and Moodle platforms. The revision of the student questionnaire to focus more on active/passive learning issues can help with the objective of improving teaching and learning performance mentioned already.
- Evidence from the self-evaluation and from the panel visit suggests that further development of the internship programme is needed given the high potential value it has for the student learning experience (the 4 week length of the internship was viewed by some students as too short). Thus, we welcome a more activist approach of assisting those students not able to find their own internships and of trying to extend the number of paid internships. We suggest that as a matter of priority, that the EMU internship office raises its own profile in IESS significantly, seeks out international best practice examples of how to raise numbers and quality of internships, and develops a tri-partite learning contract model common elsewhere to improve the experience and prevent fabrication.

## 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 evidence presented in the self-assessment report and collected in the visit sessions supports the assessment that IESS EMU meets the standards for teaching staff set out in the evaluation framework above. Teaching staff are titled as professors, associate professors, lecturers, assistants and teachers. The positions of the research staff members are lead research fellow, senior research fellow, research fellow and junior research fellow. The average age of the academic staff is close to 49 years and almost 50 % of them have a PhD.

According to the Feedback Summary provided the overall student assessment on teaching staff is positive. The development areas according to the feedback are discussed and solved between the teacher, the Director of Studies, Director of the Institute and the curriculum leader. If case needed the student representatives are also involved in the process. It was indicated in the interviews that the feedback from students leads to relevant actions.

The research profile of staff is very strong, the self evaluation shows EMU to be in the top 1% of institutions in its fields internationally. On the other hand, the input of international lecturers from universities abroad is quite low. There is some active collaboration through the Erasmus programme and BOVA University network. The amount of the international lecturers is about 20 ECTS per year.

The institute follows the EMU regulations on the basic requirements for the qualifications and skills of academic staff. Support for new staff includes supervision by a senior lecturer, review meetings for teachers in the same field, support from a mentor, development discussions and the course "Pedagogy of higher education". The academic staff is encouraged to take the opportunities for personal, pedagogical and professional development.

### Strengths

- The self-evaluation shows that permanent positions for teaching and research staff are filled with a national or European wide public recruitment. There are clear and explicit guidelines, procedures and criteria in EMU for assessing the applicants including evaluation of their academic activities, and research, teaching and creative work; participation in the work of expert groups related to teaching and student feedback.
- The self evaluation and discussion with programme leaders indicated that there is flexibility in teaching staff resources through the use of part time lecturers and research students.
- The institute has strategies to recruit the next generation of academic staff, including fixed term junior researcher contracts offered to PhD students. These PhD students are also teaching. According to the Development Plan all lecturers should have a PhD degree in year 2020, all academic positions should be filled by international competition in 2025 and at least 90% of the

teachers should have passed self-perfection periods abroad (short visits included).

- The self-assessment report and the on-site discussions indicated a well-developed performance evaluation process of the teaching staff and the research staff. Discussions are conducted with each staff member on a yearly basis to support development and career opportunities, and performance is evaluated at least once every five years. Criteria include the effectiveness of teaching (including student feedback), the level and effectiveness of research, the quality and efficiency of methodological work (including curriculum development), research and development performance and administrative performance.
- The Institute has a very strong R&D profile in agriculture, forestry, technology and engineering, health and food, environment and rural economy. The list in the Appendix 5 in the self-assessment report is quite extensive. The research of the academic staff is linked to their teaching and the students' topics of the final theses are often linked to the research of the supervisor. In the on-site discussions it was stated that 1/3 of the income of the institute comes from R&D activities. Staff are active in maintaining strong local and industry relations.
- Discussions during the visit indicated that many practitioners and professionals are engaged as part-time teachers and visiting lectures. Such cooperation has been progressing and there are plans to engage practitioners more in curriculum development.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The University has benchmarked the distribution of working hours with other universities and established minimum contact hours for staff. The self-evaluation shows that the minimum number of contact hours at EMU has decreased but is still higher than the average for Estonian HEIs. Coupled with an ageing cohort of full time staff, a deterioration in performance is a likely outcome.
- Data in the self-evaluation and supplied in advance of the visit indicates that the response rate of the feedback from completing and end-of-year students is quite low. The response rate could be increased by making it more attractive to students to participate e.g. incentives such as prizes.
- According to the self-assessment report the goal is set to increase the qualifications of the staff to all staff members having PhD by 2020. This is a challenging goal and in achieving that it might be useful to foster a steady group of PhD students.
- The self-evaluation shows that a few members of the staff seem to be very active in research projects. There could be more variety in staff members

participating in the research projects. This diversity could be obtained with sharing of knowledge and networks within the institute.

- While the self-evaluation reports that international cooperation is planned to increase in the future, staff mobility is quite low; only one or two lecturers a year. The institute should be even more active in supporting staff members to go on exchange by e.g. upgrading English language skills, seeking out other institutions likely to produce the most synergetic partnerships.
- Teaching and learning skills have been developed in the Primus programme. According to the discussions after Primus (2015) there seems to be a little cap in offering training to lecturers. The institute could join forces with partners to offer pedagogical training so that it would not be not up to the lecturers own activity to participate in courses in teaching and learning.
- The current performance management process with yearly development discussions could be used more clearly as the tool to encourage and motivate staff members to steer their actions according to the strategy and goal setting of the institute. The clear link from the strategy and targets of the institute should have a straightforward link to the goals set to the staff members in the development discussion.

## 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

Overall the self-evaluation report, site-visit and interviews confirmed the compliance between the programs and EKKK standards. The panel discussions with managers of EMU, program managers, lecturers, students (including alumni) and partners supported the information found in self-evaluation report. Students of IESS were mostly satisfied with the conditions that university has provided them for their studies, although there is still room for improvement.

### Strengths

- The self evaluation and discussions showed that EMU has well developed systems to collect feedback from students, and that many lecturers collect additional feedback to be more thorough. Students are also represented in several study-related committees. The interviews with managers of EMU, heads of study programmes, lecturers and students showed that the students' ideas are taken into account when providing feedback on lecturers, methods, programmes, etc.
- The self evaluation data showed that the employment rate of graduates is high, and although the report (page 23 figure 11) and the interviews with students reveal that a relatively low percentage of them worked directly in the rural industries (most were working in services), their skills were valuable in the marketplace and recognised as such by employers.
- As the panel's interviews with students showed, the connection between academic and practical knowledge in their studies is highly valued and appreciated by them, and students expressed high confidence with the standards and content balance of study programmes, and with standards of teaching.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- As mentioned in the self-evaluation report in paragraph 1.4.2 the dropout rate among the students is high due to a lack of awareness of the curriculum and the career opportunities. For this reason the university was planning to start introductory courses for 1<sup>st</sup> year students where they invite specialists to speak about students' future career possibilities (mentioned in the interview with heads of EMU). The panel advises the adoption of an early warning system which makes it possible to identify and support potential dropouts before things evolve too far; also spreading more clear information about curriculum among high school students to increase awareness even before enrolling at the university.
- In the interviews with the staff and students, the issue of finding a paid internship that compensates for the work student was doing was mentioned. A lot of students were working during their studies and could not afford to take an unpaid internship. In addition to the recommendations for the internship made under 'teaching and learning' (above), the panel recommends Students Career Service to work more actively to find companies that are ready to pay to interns for their work.
- As was stated in the self-evaluation report and the interviews, there is an issue of low student mobility and the plan of increasing the number of student exchange. The panel recommends increasing the number of subjects taught

in English, and conversational English as students wanted to improve their English-speaking skills.

- In the interviews with the students it was mentioned that current distance learners do not want an increase contact hours (a proposal which the IESS is considering), while Bachelor students would like to have a possibility of full-time Masters programme.

## **2. Assessment report of SPG at Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences (EUAS) commenced its activities in the autumn of 1992. Between 1992-2002, the school bore the name Mainor Business School (MBS). The founder of the school was the consulting firm Mainor and in the early years the school taught mainly economics and management. In 1997, MBS received the right of training at the higher education level. The first diploma studies education licenses were issued on four specialties - the specialties of Business Administration, Financial Management, Marketing Management and Psychology. In addition, EUAS/Mainor Business School was the first university in Estonia that introduced the three-year curricula corresponding to the Bologna agreement. From 1 December 2010, Mainor Institution of Higher Education introduced a new name - the Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences (EUAS).

The mission of Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences is the formation of entrepreneurial mindset in society. The strategic development trends of EUAS are internationalisation, continuous improvement of the content, methods and arrangement of the studies, active connection with Ülemiste City (a modern business district, where a great number of innovative enterprises operate, including EUAS). EUAS wishes to be a community of international talents and a spiritual centre of Ülemiste City, which it argues has the most excellent study and working conditions in Estonia.

EUAS occupies niches in the marketplace of which some of the courses under review are examples, and its generic USPs include flexibility of delivery, closeness to practitioners and entrepreneurs, small student group size and custom tailoring of learning to individual student needs. As an intensely market driven organisation, EUAS constantly seeks to identify new niches to exploit.

EUAS strategic planning is based on national priorities, the owner's expectations and trends and needs in society. Inside the organisation, the basis for all processes is EUAS vision and mission, the organisation's values upon which the development plan has been built. All sectoral policies and structural units' action plans are in turn based on the development plan. Action plans are results oriented, where expected results are achieved following the organisation's core values.

There are ambitious plans for student recruitment between 2017 and 2021, with numbers planned to grow from the current level of 1600 to 4000 in the event of an unspecified link-up between EUAS Mainor and an/other institution/s.

All curricula are in accordance with the requirements of higher education standard (EUAS has made comparisons of curricula with higher education standards), correspond to the requirements of occupational standard (if there is an occupational standard in the particular field), European system of occupations level 6, approved by EUAS and AS EUAS council and registered in Estonian Education Information System (EHIS).

#### Student Data of the Study Programme Group

Name of the curriculum	Year	Admission applications	Student movement			Student workload (as on 01.11)			
			admission	early leavers	graduates	TOTAL	full-time workload	part-time workload	academic leave
Business Management (in Est and Rus) and Quality Management	2014/15	453	177	195	94	1029	444	428	157
	2015/16	455	219	182	81	985	455	420	110
	2016/17	431	189	n/a	n/a	897	445	372	80
Start-up Entrepreneurship	2014/15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2015/16	27	10	5	-	10	10	-	-
	2016/17	29	8	n/a	n/a	13	13	-	-
Creativity and Business Innovation	2014/15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2015/16	17	11	7	-	11	11	-	-
	2016/17	84	24	n/a	n/a	22	22	-	-
Management of Enterprise (Master's study) in Est and Rus	2014/15	54	40	16	6	83	53	20	10
	2015/16	41	20	8	22	87	54	21	12
	2016/17	60	35	n/a	n/a	90	48	30	12
Transferred from ECOMEN in 2013 (will be closed)	2014/15	-	-	12	27	102	33	54	15
	2015/16	-	-	16	14	45	-	38	7
	2016/17	-	-	n/a	n/a	25	-	23	2

Assessment Report on Business and Administration

TOTAL	2014/15	507	217	223	127	1214	530	502	182
	2015/16	540	260	218	117	1138	530	479	129
	2016/17	604	256	n/a	n/a	1047	528	425	94

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

Given the bespoke, small cohort size of EUAS programmes, all of the seven programmes under review are discussed together in this section of the report. The rationale for this is that the underlying generic issues are the same for each of the groups of programme managers, teaching staff, students, alumni and employers the panel interviewed during the study visit. Hence all findings, strengths and areas for improvement identified below apply to all courses unless otherwise specified.

As there are some specific programme curricular and curricular development issues, the first sub-section on the curriculum is correspondingly lengthy to discuss those particularities.

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

2.3.1. Business Management (in Estonian, full-time and part-time studies; professional higher education);  
Business Management (in Russian, full-time and part-time studies; professional higher education);  
Quality Management (in Estonian, full-time and part-time studies; professional higher education);  
Start-up Entrepreneurship (in English, full-time learning; professional higher education);  
Creativity and Business Innovation (joint curriculum, in English, full-time learning; professional higher education);  
Management of Enterprise (in Estonian, part-time studies; Master's studies);  
Management of Enterprise (in Russian, part-time studies; Master's studies)

### 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.

#### General Comments:

The panel affirms that the standards for study programmes and programme development are generally met and are compliant with the requirements of the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards.

Thus, 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; study programs include practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.

According to the interviews university management aims at a strong internationalisation; this target is operationalised by setting a goal of 10% foreign students p. a. (according to the interview with the university management). Target markets for attracting new students are countries of the former Soviet Union and a radius of 1,000 KM around the city of Bangalore (India).

The goal to consider entrepreneurship in all programmes is ensured by employing external lecturers (industry experts). A strong interaction between internal and external lecturers is wanted by the university. This statement by the university management was confirmed in several interview sessions. The head of a study programme is responsible for selecting external lecturers.

#### General strengths:

- The curriculum development system is seen as flexible and positive by staff and students. According to the interviews for each study programme a curriculum development conference is held once a year. Curricula and module descriptions are structured flexibly and if a change in a curriculum is needed it takes about one year and the rectorate is responsible for the administration of the process.
- The University has a very close relationship to companies like ABB and these are strongly integrated in the design of the curricula (stressed by employers during the interviews).

- During the interviews external lecturers showed a high commitment towards EUAS and emphasized that the motivation to teach is mainly intrinsic. Self-development and serving the society were mentioned as some of the most important goals. Remuneration only plays a minor role (since remuneration for lecturing is obviously below hourly rates that are charged business consultancy).
- Practical experience plays a dominant role for selecting lecturers. According to the interviews part-time lecturers are working in FPOs, full-time lecturers are involved in business consulting etc. Moreover, joined projects (with companies) are used to keep students in touch with labour market's needs.
- Students and employers appreciate the university's flexibility and the possibility to work and study simultaneously. Moreover, the practical approach and small groups were appreciated by those stakeholder groups.
- Student expectations towards university (including but not limited to organisational issues) and lecturers are met to a very high degree. Alumni emphasized their possibility to influence the lectures and the lecturers. Overall student satisfactions expressed in the interviews was very high.
- Evidence from meetings with students and alumni indicated that students apply for the programme basically due to word-of-mouth marketing.

General areas of improvement and recommendations:

- On the homepage detailed module descriptions are not available in English. To follow the internationalisation strategy university should enable foreign students to find detailed information as well.
- Before an external lecturer teaches at EUAS he should receive information and discuss course contents, pedagogical concepts, etc. with the programme director. During the interviews only one person mentioned this process. Although there might be a strong interaction between programme heads and external lecturers (that was not mentioned) the implementation of a standard process (especially for those lecturers teaching for the first time at EUAS) might be useful to ensure programme quality.
- The role of the heads of curriculum could not be clarified during the interviews. The expert panel was not able to figure out whether the director's role is mainly on administration (scheduling, keeping contact to external lecturers, etc.) or on the strategic and, thus, academic development of the study programme. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to prepare a role description of the programme heads. If

programme heads shall be responsible for the strategic development, then university management should set up clearly defined standards of the academic profile including but not limited to a strong programme related academic track record (publications, conference presentation, etc.) and a PhD (or equivalent).

- Students and alumni pointed out the programmes' strong focus on the domestic Estonian market. International topics (e. g. in accounting and taxation) are not considered in the curricula. Especially with regard to the planned internationalisation strategy and the fact that Estonia is a small (labour) market we strongly recommend to check the possibility to implement these topics in the curricula.

Additional comments on Business Management and Quality Management (all time models and languages):

None

Strengths of Business Management and Quality Management (all time models and languages):

- In the interviews students expressed their high appreciation to study in different languages. Study programmes are very flexible (e. g. offered in Estonian and Russian) and, thus, facilitate internationalisation and access to higher education.
- Feedback is provided by students regularly (visiting the lecturers, writing mails). Feedback is taken seriously by teaching staff, during interviews students pointed out very good response rate.
- Curriculum development is not restricted to the annual conference but interviews showed a constant interaction between the lecturers involved in the programme. Module descriptions are flexible. Thus, lecturers can respond to change in the labour market without going through any formal process (curriculum development conference) but can make minor adjustments corresponding to the technological development or labour market requirements.

Areas of improvement and recommendations (Business Management and Quality Management):

- In the interviews students identified a substantial lack of international oriented lectures (see general remarks) and, additionally, a lack of sales related lectures. Programme head should – in cooperation with employers

and lecturers – check under which conditions it might be possible and useful to implement these topics in the curricula.

- The role of “entrepreneurship” with regard to the programmes in business management and quality management could not be made clear to the expert panel.
  - Entrepreneurship could be seen as some kind of ethos (“make it possible”) that is reflected in the programmes’ vision. In this case entrepreneurship does not necessarily be reflected in the module descriptions.
  - On the other hand entrepreneurship could be a leading topic of the module descriptions applied at EUAS. Both the business management and the quality management programmes include an entrepreneurship module (15 ECTS). Beside this entrepreneurship is not considered in the module description.

The expert panel does not want to make a recommendation which of these two ideas does fit better into EUAS’ strategy. However, if the second option is chosen by university management, entrepreneurship related topics should be considered to a larger extent in the module descriptions.

Additional comments on Creativity and Business Innovation and Start-up Entrepreneurship:

None.

Strengths of Creativity and Business Innovation and Start-up Entrepreneurship:

- The curriculum of Start-up Entrepreneurship is clearly structured to follow the tasks that need to be done during a start-up (during the entire three study years).
- During the interviews lecturers and students expressed an extraordinarily high commitment towards the programs.
- Lecturers’ CVs in the self evaluation show a very high practical background (including those of internal lecturers).

Areas of improvement and recommendations (Creativity and Business Innovation and Start-up Entrepreneurship):

- In line with university standards curricula are subject to discussions once a year (curriculum development conference). According to the expert panel’s understanding there is no clear guideline which parts of the

curriculum might be subject to changes every year (to follow up technological developments) and which (if any) modules need to be fixed for several years. In order to facilitate curriculum development it might be useful to set up such a list and consider the facts and circumstances that lead to the decision.

- The Start-up and Entrepreneurship is strongly focused on the participants own start-up (annex 19). On the one hand this focus can be regarded as one of the USPs of the programme. On the other hand the programme needs to take into consideration that 90% of start-ups fail and that the employability of those graduates needs to be ensured as well. Thus, setting stronger focus on "traditional" fields of business administration might be useful to ensure long-term employability of the alumni.
- After the completion of the programmes students can apply for a master's programme. To ensure the connectivity (diploma – master) *academic* excellence in the diploma's curriculum has to be ensured. Students need to learn about theoretical models and how to use these approaches in their own research and their own work experience. The scepticism towards economic literature (including but not limited to entrepreneurial journals) expressed by some of the lecturers during the interviews might imply a programme focus that disregards the overall importance of theoretical knowledge. Therefore, expert panel recommends reviewing the curriculum focusing on the question of how to combine traditional economic theory and the extensive literature in the field of entrepreneurship with those special competences that are needed for the start-up segment.
- During the interviews expert panel understood that in the study programme start-up entrepreneurship no internship is scheduled. According to the curriculum an internship in the start-up entrepreneurship program counts for 32 ECTS (annex 19, p. 10 f.) and is completed in the student's own companies. First, the university should make sure that potential students do not get a false picture of the programme. Second, documents at hand and interviews did not provide a clear picture in what way this internship is supervised by lecturers and what happens if students are not able to start their own business (or fail in a very early stage). The university should ensure a close support (or document this support in the curriculum) to ensure learning outcomes and define a rule under which conditions internship can be passed in companies other than the student's own start-up.

Additional comments on Management of Enterprise (all languages):

None.

Strengths of Management of Enterprise (all languages):

- Lecturers have a strong practical background and were able to explain (during the interviews) how they consider special characteristics in their lectures.

Areas of improvement and recommendations Management of Enterprise (all languages):

- Research methods are considered in a module on their own in the curriculum (counting for 14 ECTS). However, the expert panel was able to identify two major restrictions of this module: First, no subject of the module is graded but only a difference between fail and pass is made. Second, application of research methods seems to be rather underdeveloped. E. g. freeware like R is only considered in an overview; software like SPSS is not used by the students on their own. According to the curriculum (Annex 20) only MS Excel is used in class. Against this background expert panel recommend reviewing the research methods module and to put a stronger focus on the students' practical capabilities. An undershoot of research and research methods was also implicitly expressed by the students. According to the interviews the main focus of the Master's programmes is on the application of practical knowledge. Analytical and/or methodological skills seems to play only a minor role.
- Self-evaluation report and annexes name a substantial number of projects (with partner institutions and companies). In order to increase EUAS' visibility in the scientific society and sharpen its academic profile we recommend to submit the results of those projects to peer reviewed journals and to publish them.

## 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

Taking into account the self evaluation and findings from the visit, the panel concludes that there are sufficient resources to meet current student needs, although it has some specific concerns about library/learning resources, and has serious questions about resource sustainability and resource planning.

### Strengths

- EUAS is funded primarily from student fee income, and the self-evaluation shows that it is able to cover its current costs from this income. The data shows a year on year increase of foreign student numbers adding significantly to the revenue stream, and plans were outlined by senior managers for further growth in overseas markets.
- The panel's tour of facilities and discussion with staff and students affirmed that the physical facilities are suitably flexible for teaching and for smaller group work, and that the university is able to draw on additional teaching spaces in the vicinity if needed.
- The investment in a high staff to student ratio is a strong selling point of the university according to students and alumni the panel listened to.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- It was not clear just how stable, predictable or concrete future funding arrangements were from either the self-evaluation or the discussions with staff. Funding for capital investments has to come from other sources including loans from the board and previously, from endowments from the late founder, and participation in state level programs like EDU ja TEGU. The sustainability of these sources is not clear. The projections for income growth in the self-evaluation from steep increases in student numbers over the next 4-5 years go against a long term declining trend in student numbers, and it was not evident to the panel what these projections were based on. Urgent clarification is needed.
- Similarly, the laudable aim of growing foreign student numbers outlined by senior staff to us has to be backed up by a marketing plan and the resources to support it. Internationalisation is limited and cannot take place e. g. in Latin America due to the restricted number of Estonian embassies. For marketing purposes primarily online tools are used. EUAS does not operate an international office so far, nor e.g. recruitment agents locally, advertising in local markets, market research, recruitment visits, support of alumni networks.
- The panel found that the on-site library is very small, and that the staff and students rely on access to public and other university (e.g. Tartu, TUT etc), library resources for materials. While this is understandable in the context of the distance mode of study of chosen by most students, and even if major materials are available online, it is necessary to guarantee access to different databases through a programme of investment in online subscriptions to support lecturers researching class material, or students who are preparing assignments and theses. We recommend that EUAS plans for investment in this area be enhanced, especially in the context of the sharp increases in student numbers being proposed.

## 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

Taking into account the self-evaluation document and the findings from the visit, the panel confirms that the programmes under review are broadly compliant with EKKA standards of teaching and learning. Supporting statements and data in the self-evaluation, the evidence from teaching staff, managers and students provided a very positive picture of the learning environment, of active teaching styles, of flexible modes of delivery, excellent monitoring systems, and of openness to pedagogical development. There are nevertheless areas for improvement.

### Strengths

- The self-evaluation document and visit comments from teaching staff and managers highlighted the role of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), which provides basic training and professional updating for staff including the large number of guest and part time lecturers, and also for students to develop their learning and time management skills.
- The self evaluation and feedback from staff during the visit drew the panel's attention to the EUAS SIS Traffic Lights System for monitoring student performance and identifying potential problems early on. A demonstration of the system showed an impressive multi factor approach, and it has the added advantage of symbiosis with the Moodle platform. This is an extremely valuable tool in helping achieve teaching and learning outcomes and lowering non-completion rates.

- The self evaluation details the extensive use of APEL (VÖTA) and the system which supports it (i.e. student advisors and APEL consultants), so helping fulfil the goal of structuring learning to the individual skills and knowledge profile of students.
- The self evaluation and comments from students and employers indicate an appreciation of courses with high levels of international subject content e.g. quality standards, international finance, English and Russian language programmes.
- The self evaluation document and evidence collected in the sessions with teaching staff and students detailed many examples of active learning techniques in use including presentations, simulations, scenario building, problem solving, financial planning, mystery shopping exercises etc.
- Evidence collected from students and alumni suggested a responsiveness by teaching staff and programme leaders to student feedback, enabled by the small group environment of the programmes, the ease of contacting staff and the 'family' feel of the institution.
- The extensive use of practitioners in teaching detailed in the self evaluation and relayed to the panel by student groups in the visit was seen as a major USP, and provided two way opportunities for both parties.
- As many teaching staff are teaching at various other institutions too, they are able to avail themselves of training opportunities for teaching and learning skill enhancement which benefit their work at EUAS.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Whilst the CELT was an important asset to the University, evidence from both staff and student groups indicated there is considerable room for development. Students in particular seemed to be unaware of its existence and thus of the valuable support it could provide them with to develop their learning skills. On the staff side, there was also some lack of awareness of what it had to offer; in particular it needs to strengthen its programme and presence in vetting and supporting new teaching staff and guest lecturers to raise pedagogical standards and reinforce the University's teaching and learning philosophy.
- Evidence from student groups identified instances of formal styles of teaching and learning where opportunities for student participation and engagement were absent. Attention also needs to be given by CELT to ensure that part time lecturers understand the levels of achievement expected for the courses they are teaching.
- Evidence from the self-evaluation and from student feedback data suggests that it is sometimes difficult to find a tutor and to get feedback on homework, and that marking ranges for assessments were too narrow.

- Whilst there is detail in the self evaluation of some staff and student mobility, including the use of foreign staff, there is much more scope for developing these aspects of internationalisation notwithstanding the difficulties of students in full time work studying abroad. In particular, incoming staff mobility could be further improved, as could access to MOOCs from international providers as a teaching tool.
- Should the projected increases in student numbers be achieved, then the USPs of low group numbers, personalised learning plans, flexible assessment and high staff to student ratios are in jeopardy. The panel recommends a strategic review to take into account these likely effects on the teaching and learning process.

## 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 evidence presented in the self-assessment report and collected in the visit sessions supports the assessment that EUAS/Mainor meets the standards for teaching staff set out in the evaluation framework above. According to the self-assessment report the number of full time employees is 56 (The main figures describing the school, page 6) and number of lecturers is 35 (Table 14. Comparison of Lecturer Qualifications, page 41). In Annexes 30-33 there are lists of the lecturers and their qualifications for each study programme:

- For Business Management (est, rus) and Quality Management there are 31 full-time lecturers out of which 11 (35 %) have a PhD and 37 part-time or visiting lecturers.

- For Creativity and Business Administration there are 47 full-time lecturers out of which 13 (28 %) have a PhD and 21 part-time or visiting lecturers.
- For Start-Up Entrepreneurship there are two full-time lecturers and at least 40 part-time or visiting lecturers.
- For Management of Enterprise (est, rus) there are 19 full-time lecturers out of which 9 (47 %) have a PhD and 11 part-time or visiting lecturers.

The role of practitioners as visiting and part-time lecturers was emphasised in the on-site discussions. The management of EUAS is focusing on ensuring the healthy balance between full-time lecturers and practitioners. A full-time lecturer is acting as a lecturer responsible for a module of speciality to ensure its coherent implementation. In every topic there is a lecturer and practitioner involved. In EUAS there is teaching staff with adequate qualifications.

EUAS has close cooperation with Ülemiste City companies and organisations. Cooperation between the lecturers is supported. The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching was established 2015 and its aim is to train lecturers, support the use of educational technology and maintain an active mentoring system.

Lecturers of a specific field form a working group with the Head of Curriculum in order to join their forces in curriculum development and development of the modules and specialities. R&D is applied research and produces solutions to business life. In the self-assessment report and in the on-site discussions there were good examples of international cooperation but generally the international activities and staff mobility seems quite low.

The EUAS is regularly collecting diverse feedback from students, graduates and employers. In addition to the formal feedback the students also have the possibility to give informal and personal feedback to the lecturers and the Head of Curriculum. In the discussions conducted on site it was indicated that the Heads of Curriculum meet with the student groups regularly.

In EUAS performance reviews are conducted once a year and an evaluation is carried out every three years. In the annual development discussion, the individual development plans, work results and feedback, are discussed. According to the self-assessment report (Tables 12, 13 and 16) the employee satisfaction has improved during the past couple of years.

### Strengths

- According to Annex 9 the student feedback is very positive; especially the sections "Preparations and the environment" and the "Lecturer's actions" score very highly.

- According to the interviews full-time lecturers and part-time/guest lecturers know each other quite well and there seems to be a lot of (informal) contact.
- Several stakeholders (e. g. students) pointed out the positive effect of lecturers from abroad.
- The evidence from the self-evaluation and from discussions with staff, students and alumni indicated that collaboration with different partners is lively on the local and national level, and that an ample number of practitioners are involved as visiting or part-time staff. In the discussions the students said that the lecturers have an open door -policy and they are willing to listen to the students concerns and generally they had the impression that the school is interested in their feedback.
- The EUAS is described by the students and lecturers as a very flexible and practical orientated University of Applied Sciences. Meetings of the panel with staff indicated they are very satisfied working at EUAS.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The EUAS is very flexible and practically oriented but the development of the academic aspect of the staff profile should be strengthened as the number of staff with doctorates is still too low. This can be achieved through e.g. material incentives for staff wishing to progress to an/or complete PhDs, or raising requirements in recruitment job descriptions.
- Many of the lecturers only hold a master's degree but not a PhD. University management and programme heads should ensure that a certain percentage of lecturers is held by qualified staff. Beside the formal qualification (i. e. a lecturer's highest degree) it should be ensured that university teachers face incentives to publish their own research results and present them at conferences. Currently, some of the lecturers have no (current) publications at all (according to the CVs provided).
- The number of international visiting staff and staff mobility is low and should be increased. International collaboration could be enhanced with existing Estonian partners and networks, and with EUAS connections and partnerships with international institutions. Minimum targets aligned with EUAS student recruitment targets and new international programme development should be set for international staff mobility.
- According to the strategy the number of students is planned to increase sharply. This is a challenge for the recruiting and staffing of new high quality lecturers. The EUAS should create a staffing plan for the future needs which includes strategies for collaboration with other universities in Estonia and with their existing partners nationally and internationally.

## 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

Overall the self-evaluation report, site-visit and interviews confirmed the compliance between the programmes and EKKK standards. The panel discussions with managers of EUAS, programme managers, lecturers, students (including alumni) and partners supported the information found in self-evaluation report. Students of EUAS were satisfied with the conditions that university has provided them with for their studies. There are still some areas for improvement.

### Strengths

- The self evaluation and panel meetings indicated a well developed feedback system and the fact that the students were heard. Due to the small numbers of students in programme groups, lecturers were seen as responsive and to have close contact with students when teaching which was highly appreciated.
- The self evaluation showed that dropout rate was relatively low, when it is taken into account that most of the students are working at the time of their studies. The 'traffic lights' system of the SIS shown to the panel by staff also plays a big part of keeping the dropout rate as low as possible.
- Students in EUAS were highly satisfied with all the conditions the university has provided them. They also praised the flexibility and lecturers' attitude towards them during their studies.
- Students of EUAS as well as employers and collaboration partners praised the practicality of the studies. It was judged to be a good combination between theoretical and practical knowledge which made it easier to understand and teach how theory works in real life conditions.
- EUAS was viewed by staff and students alike as a strong community where students as well as lecturers could widen their professional network. Students could also contact school and their lecturers even after

graduation, which was a good example of how the university supported their alumni.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Internationalization was one of the issues in EUAS. As most of the students could not go to study abroad due to their career and families, the university should focus on bringing foreign students in. The interviews with students indicated that they would like to have some more subjects taught in English, which could be a good way to improve their English-speaking skills as well as bring them together with foreign students.
- As EUAS has a plan to increase their student numbers in coming years, they might face an issue, where all the aspects that students currently like (flexibility, personal approach in teaching, considering students' feedback, etc.) may disappear in the future. That should be considered when taking the plans for expansion further.
- In the interview session with alumni they brought up an issue on evaluation of their final thesis. They found that the level of difficulty was not always reflected in the assessment marks for some of the theses. They proposed raising the bar for the complexity requirement of the final thesis, and that this be fully reflected in final marks to discriminate between excellent, average and poor work.