

Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency

Development Plan for 2012–2016

Self-definition

The Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA) is a leading competence centre in the field of external evaluation of educational institutions in Estonia. EKKA acts in accordance with agreements and trends in the European Education Area, retains information about trends and best practices also outside Europe, applies up-to-date know-how tailored for a local context, and employs analyses of the results of external evaluations to enhance competitiveness of the Estonian educational system.

Mission

EKKA's mission is to promote quality in the field of education and thereby increase the competitiveness of the Estonian society.

EKKA's **core process** is external evaluation of educational institutions that is accompanied and supported by the following **key activities**:

- Providing institutional accreditation of higher education institutions and quality assessment of their study programme groups
- Providing accreditation of study programme groups in vocational education and training
- Carrying out expert analyses in order to grant educational institutions the right to conduct studies
- Analysing the evaluation results and making recommendations for improvement to educational institutions and the Ministry of Education and Research (MER)
- Informing the general public of the outcomes of evaluations
- Training the assessment experts
- Counselling and training educational institutions
- Participating in international networks for external evaluation of educational institutions

EKKA's **main target groups** are the educational institutions under evaluation, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) and individuals who continue to pursue education.

EKKA includes educational institutions, student organisations, ministries, professional associations, employers' organisations and other quality assessment agencies **as partners** in its development activities.

EKKA's core values

Equity: applying the principles of equal treatment in all its activities.

Competency: commanding original and up-to-date know-how in its field; its experts being experienced external assessors who can take into account the relevant context; engaging in continuous professional development and introducing the results of its activities internationally.

Cooperation: including partners in development activities, flexibly accommodating their needs and capabilities.

Openness: being open to new ideas, flexibly reacting to changes in the environment; maintaining the transparency of evaluation procedures and publicising the results.

Vision 2020

EKKA shall be an internationally recognised competence centre in the field of external evaluation of educational institutions, valued by its partners.

Critical success factors – key prerequisites for achieving the objectives

1. **Professionalism:** EKKA assessment committees' reports and EKKA's analyses regarding the evaluation results will be professional and serve as a basis for the development activities of educational institutions.
2. **Relevance of communications:** Information about evaluation results will be prompt, target-group oriented and comprehensive.
3. **Visibility on an international level:** EKKA will be listed on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), EKKA's experts will be valued by other agencies.

Objectives for 2016

- I. EKKA's activity will have contributed to the improvement of quality in the fields of higher education and vocational education and training
- II. EKKA will be a reliable partner for its main target groups
- III. Public awareness of the quality of Estonian higher education and vocational education and training (in international comparisons) will have increased
- IV. EKKA will be internationally recognised

Assessment criteria – basis for deciding whether we have achieved our objectives

- I. **EKKA's activity will have contributed to the improvement of quality in the field of education:**
 1. EKKA's assessment reports and analyses will be serving as a basis for development activities of educational institutions (in improving quality). Indicators: Feedback from educational institutions, results of interim workshops, self-evaluation reports. One or more Estonian universities will have achieved a visible place in international rankings (indirect).
 2. Based on the results of evaluations and/or because of them, there will have taken place structural changes in higher education and vocational education and training both on a national level and within an educational institution. Indicators: Dynamics of the number of educational

institutions, dynamics of the number of study programmes (focusing, concentrating resources), the number of joint study programmes.

3. EKKA's contribution to promoting quality culture will be noticeable. Indicators: The number of trainings/workshops, the number of participants (representatives of educational institutions, experts, learners), results of feedback, results of re-evaluations, improved quality of self-evaluation reports.
4. In cooperation with general education schools, EKKA will have developed a vision of principles and procedures for external evaluation of general education schools.

II. **EKKA will be a reliable partner for its main target groups:**

1. EKKA's assessment decisions will be professional, thoroughly reasoned and evidence based. Indicator: Contesting of the evaluation results by educational institutions and/or the Ministry of Education and Research (MER).
2. Satisfaction by educational institutions under evaluation, with the professionalism of external evaluations conducted by EKKA and with applicability of results, will be steadily good or increasing. Indicator: Feedback.
3. Decision-makers in the field of education will take into account evaluation results when deciding the different issues (funding, structural changes, etc.). Indicator: Examples from actual cases.
4. The involvement of EKKA in national and international working groups engaged in the development of education will be stable or increasing. Indicator: The participation of EKKA's representatives in national and international working groups.

III. **Public awareness of the quality of Estonian higher education and vocational education and training (including in international comparisons) will have increased:**

1. Sound information will be available and prompt. Information about evaluation results will be target-group oriented and comprehensive. Indicators: EKKA's website traffic; the number of overviews of evaluation results addressed to different target groups (educational institutions, MER, learners); the number of media reports.
2. Individuals who continue to pursue education will be informed of the quality of higher education and vocational education and training provided in Estonia (cooperating with Internet portals, career counsellors). Indicator: Survey of first-year students.
3. Student awareness of quality will have increased: cooperating with student and pupil organisations (e.g., meetings with student organisations of larger universities, including students who are active in different decision-making bodies). Indicators: The number of learners who have participated in evaluations; the number of events, learner feedback to such events.

4. Employers will be aware of the quality of educational institutions and preparation of graduates. Indicators: Appearance of EKKA's employees on forums of employers and in the media; the number of employer representatives in different assessment committees and working groups; decisions made by professional associations based on the evaluation results.

IV. **EKKA will be internationally recognised:**

1. EKKA will be a full member of EQAR and ENQA by 2013.
2. EKKA will be officially a National Reference Point for vocational education and training (NRP).
3. EKKA will have coordinated the evaluations of two foreign educational institutions by 2016.
4. EKKA will be included in development projects for the quality systems of third countries.
5. An EKKA representative will have been elected to the ENQA Board or the INQAAHE Board.
6. EKKA will have organised at least one major international conference concerning the evaluation of higher education (e.g., INQAAHE Forum) and will have been an organiser of a workshop of NRPs for vocational education and training.

Implementation

To plan necessary actions for achieving the objectives in its development plan, EKKA will prepare a work plan for each calendar year. Implementation of the planned development will be evaluated in EKKA's development workshops as needed, but at least once a year.

EKKA shall report once a year to the Quality Assessment Council on the progress in achieving the objectives of the development plan.

Approved by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council on its session of 16/03/2012.