

## **Assessment Report**

# Journalism and Information

University of Tartu

Tallinn University

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 Journalism and Information in two higher education institutions: University of Tartu 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.

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The assessment process was coordinated by Hillar Bauman (EKKA).

After the preparation phase, the work of the assessment team in Estonia started on Monday, 17 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 Tallinn University (Tuesday 18 and Wednesday 19 April) and University of Tartu (Thursday 20 and Friday 21 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 Saturday, April 22, 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**

The overall judgment of the panel is that all the standards that are specified are being met, at both the University of Tartu and at Tallinn University, in all of the study programmes. There are some differences in the quality of the programs or teaching groups that are discussed in detail within the chapters for each study programme as well as the recommendations specified for each study programme.

Both Tallinn University and the University of Tartu have gone through a series of major structural and institutional changes in the past few years. At Tartu University, the study programmes of information science, which were previously placed at Viljandi Culture Academy of UT, was merged with the Institute of Journalism and Communication in 2013. And in 2014, this institute, together with

sociology and social policy, was joined into a new unit, the Institute of Social Studies. At Tallinn University, 26 existing units were merged into nine units in 2015. The information study programs are placed in the School of Digital Technologies, whereas the journalism and communication study programs are positioned at the Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School. These changes have brought about initiatives, such as collaboration between various disciplines, deeper interdisciplinary education, provided scope for the sharing of best practice, and created opportunities for restructuring and development of the study programmes. Nevertheless, the panel wants to underline that despite of these extensive structural changes and the merging of units that have already been made, there may be further opportunities for collaboration and changes in the study programs. This will, however, be discussed more in detail in the chapters about the study programmes below.

The panel regards it to be a particular strength that the study programs at the University of Tartu and Tallinn University have different emphases. For both journalism and communication, and for information science, the programs do not compete, but are distinct from those of the other university. The journalism and communication study programs at the University of Tartu are more academic and research oriented, while at the Tallinn University the emphasis is more on the practical side. For the information science and knowledge management study programs the situation is vice versa. The study programs at Tallinn University emphasize more the aspects of theory and research but at the University of Tartu there is a very strong practical orientation. Thus, the study programs at the universities are not overlapping but have distinctive character and approach that differs from those of the other university. The students benefit from this as they are given the opportunity to make a choice based on their different needs and expectations.

Furthermore, the panel was impressed with the strong commitment of the academic staff to their work, both at the University of Tartu and Tallinn University. It must, however, also be emphasised that for the staff of the study programs of information science, as well as journalism and communication, the structural changes at the universities, and the development work it has brought about in the study programs, have been very demanding and that the workload of the staff has been extremely high. The panel would though like to stress that the staff has made an effort not only to adjust to these changes but also to respond to them in constructive ways, by using the opportunity to seek collaboration and develop the study programmes. However, if such a high workload among the staff continues for much longer it may become a serious problem in the future. It is urgent for the universities to address this issue and to guarantee the continuity of academic staff in the future. Therefore, the panel recommends that more young qualified staff should be recruited for the study programmes, in the near future.

The panel is concerned by the financial models for the study programs and recommends a revision of it. The financing model that was agreed upon after the higher education reform could not compensate for the removal of private money to the full extent (so-called out-of-state-budget study places financed by the students themselves, p. 14 University of Tartu self-evaluation report). This has caused a great decrease in financing the studies in social sciences, particular since the academic year 2015/2016. The panel emphasis that when restructure reforms are being made, appropriate budgetary reforms must be connected to it

and a fair allocation of budget between subject areas ensured. Insufficient financial resources is a severe weakness which can have limiting effects in several ways, for example by preventing the necessary recruitment of young qualified staff to ensure sustainability and continuity of academic staff in the future, but also by seriously increasing the workload for the staff, and by hampering both the research activity and the professional self-development of the staff, just to name a few matters.

Apart from the lack of financial resources, the infrastructure and resources at both universities is adequate for the needs of the study programmes. The resources at Tallinn University are excellent and the panel considers the resources to be optimal at the University of Tartu. However, the panel points out that for both universities it will be a challenge to maintain the good condition of the resources. It must be emphasised that due to the nature of the study programmes it is extremely important that the digital study and research environment is constantly kept up-to-date and the panel therefore recommends that the universities find a way to ensure this. At Tallinn University, a fund with a special budget to renew technology has been set up which is considered to be a strength.

International mobility of students in both Tallinn University and the University of Tartu is too low and it needs to be encouraged more. Some of the reasons for this may be difficult to deal with as they may lie outside the realm of the universities. For example, during the interviews with both teachers and students, the panel was told that a relatively high number of students work beside their study, and that in addition, some of them have family responsibilities. This is a challenge for both universities but, nevertheless, a more concentrated effort should be made to improve the situation. It is though considered positive that the universities are aware of this problem, and from what the panel learned during the interviews is that both Tallinn University and the University of Tartu are seeking solutions to deal with it. In addition to the solutions that were mentioned during the visits as potential possibilities, it is recommended by the panel that more should be done to provide students with information about the existing mobility programs, and in particular, that students should be made more aware of the advantages of international mobility for their study and for their professional future.

The student dropout rate varies between study programmes, but is rather high for some of the programmes, at both the University of Tartu and Tallinn University. Aside from reasons such as students failing to meet the requirements made in the study, or discovering that they had made an inappropriate choice of study, the panel was told that the pressure of the students' personal and financial situation is also a reason for dropping out. Although steps can be taken to support students who have problems related to the first two points, and the panel acknowledges that the universities attempt to do so, the last point is more difficult to deal with. It seems that a number of students find it difficult to combine their study obligations with their personal situation related to work and family responsibilities.

The panel recommends that both the University of Tartu and Tallinn University should attempt to develop procedures that improve the response rates of student feedback on study programmes as a whole. During the visits, the panel was told by students, teachers and programme coordinators that because students are

only obliged to evaluate a certain number of courses, rather than requiring them to give feedback on all courses that they complete, the outcome from the evaluation system does not create a very clear picture. Results from the evaluation of individual courses may for example not be comparable across academic years. Evaluation system that allows for longitudinal comparison, should be strived for. Teachers in all study programmes try to seek feedback directly from students on their courses, which is useful for solving problems here and now, and the panel commends them for doing so. However, a more systematic survey to collect student feedback is recommended. In addition, when it is necessary to make changes based on the feedback, students should be made aware of what amendments have been made.

# 1. Assessment report of SPG at the University of Tartu

## 1.1. Introduction

In 2016, the University of Tartu celebrates the 384th anniversary of its founding. The University of Tartu that was established in 1632 as Academia Gustaviana has been reborn a number of times throughout its history.

According to the University of Tartu Act adopted on 16 February 1995, the University of Tartu is the national university of the Republic of Estonia. Its mission is to advance science and culture, provide the possibilities for the acquisition of higher education based on the development of science and technology on the three levels of higher education in the field of humanities, social, medical and natural sciences and to provide public services based on teaching, research and other creative activities.

The Institute of Social Studies who is responsible for the study group journalism and information at the UT, belongs to the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Faculty of Social Sciences is one of the youngest faculties of the University of Tartu. It is also the largest, most diverse and most internationally recognized centre for research for the social sciences in Estonia.

Under the structural reform, initiated in 2014, the nine faculties and five colleges of the University of Tartu were consolidated into four fields, one of which is *Socialia*. As of January 2016, the Faculty consists of 6 institutes and two colleges: School of Law, School of Economics and Business Administration, Institute of Social Studies, Institute of Education, Institute of Psychology, Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, Narva College, Pärnu College.

In total, there are 79 curricula at the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Institute of Social Studies is responsible for 10 curricula. In the study group journalism and information, the Institute of Social Studies is responsible for five curricula: information management (professional higher education programme), journalism and communication (BA), communication management (MA), information and knowledge management (MA) and journalism (MA).

Various disciplinary developments and structural reforms created an opportunity for joining forces and widening the breadth of collaboration between different units. Therefore the Department of Information Education of the Viljandi Culture Academy merged with the Institute of Journalism and Communication in 2013 and in January 2014 the Institute of Journalism, Communication and Information Studies and the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy joined into one unit. The reasoning behind that was to connect similar fields of studies and to catalyze deeper cooperation and synergy.

**Table 1** Curriculum group of journalism and information: enrolled students and candidates in 2013-2016

Code	Curriculum	Number of students*	Candidates				Enrolled students		
			2013	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016



<b>1.Level</b>									
2487	BA, Journalism and communication	160	172	146	176	168	49	50	52
120187	Information management (regular)	56	52	37	45	48	14	19	23
120187	Information management (Open University)	127	142	84	71	80	40	42	44
<b>2.Level</b>									
2630	MA, Journalism	26	18	16	11	12	13	9	8
2633	MA, Communication management	59	47	35	43	44	25	25	26
112237	MA, Information and knowledge management□	40	22	13	32	37	9	15	17

\*-Number of students is given for 01.11.2016; □ - Until 30.08.2015 under name „Knowledge and information management”

**Table 2** Curriculum group of journalism and information: number of graduates since 2013

Code	Curriculum	Year of enrolment	Number of enrolled students	Number of graduates (with nominal or +1 period)	Graduates (with nominal or +1 period, %)	Drop-outs*
<b>1.Level</b>						
120187	Information Management (regular)	2013/14	17	12	71%	0
120187	Information Management (Open University)	2013/14	32	16	50%	0
2487	Journalism and Communication	2013/14	51	25	49%	13
<b>2.Level</b>						
2630	Journalism	2013/14	16	10	63%	3
2633	Communication Management	2013/14	26	25	96%	1
112237	Information and Knowledge Management	2013/14	15	4	27%	5

\*Drop-outs – ex-matriculation upon personal will or because of inadequate study results + change of curriculum (data as on 01/11/2016).

The table only presents the data on those enrolled after the higher education reform as the earlier statistics are not comparable. For example, before that it was possible to study both full time and part time, as well as in the regular and Open University study format, in the curriculum of journalism and communication.

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

Following the structural reform that was initiated at the University of Tartu in 2014, the Faculty of Social Sciences has a total of 79 curricula, and of those 10 curricula are within the Institute of Social Studies. The panel considers this interdisciplinary to be a valuable strength that creates a possibility for

collaboration between study programmes. This has already been done to some extent but the panel recommends that the opportunities for deeper cooperation should be explored further. Suggestions about this will be discussed more in detail in the chapters about the study programmes below.

Changes have been made to the curriculum for the Information and Knowledge Management (MA) programme every year since 2012/2013. The curriculum for the Information Management programme has also been restructured regularly and considerably. It is too early to evaluate the success of the present curriculums as it only started in the academic year 2016/2017, however, the panel emphasises the need for firmer information science research-based education in these programmes. Likewise, changes in the study programs Journalism and Communication (BA), Communication Management (MA) and Journalism (MA) have been rapidly following one another over the last four to five year. Thus, the study programmes have undergone major changes in the past few years. This has been very challenging for the staff and the workload has been very high. Therefore the panel recommends that a period of stability and consistency should be considered.

Apart from financial resources, which are insufficient, the panel found the infrastructure and resources at the Institute of Social Sciences to be optimal. The infrastructure has recently been improved, the technology has been updated (hardware and software) and digital learning materials developed. Students register and have access to all information about study programmes, courses, study material and their academic progress through TU Study Information System (SIS). Timetables are provided two months before the end of the previous semester, which allows students to plan their study well ahead. Moodle is used as e-learning environment and the programme is connected with SIS. These are all examples of valuable improvements that are necessary for modern teaching. The panel considers it vital that the good condition of the infrastructure and resources will be maintained.

The students that the panel met at the visit are capable and motivated to learn. In general they were satisfied with the study programmes and teaching, as well as with the relations and interaction with the teaching staff, who can easily be accessed. The student dropout rate varies between study programmes but is rather high for some of the programmes. During the visit the panel was told that due to financial reasons many students work beside their study. This may, at least to some extent, explain the dropout rate, as well as why a rather low rate of students conclude their studies in nominal time. The panel recommends that the University of Tartu should monitor the situation closely and try to find flexible ways to improve it. The same explanation as described above may apply to why the international mobility of students is too low. Steps have already been taken to improve the situation, as the Institute of Social Studies has concluded a number of Erasmus agreement to support international mobility. However, the panel emphasises the need to find flexible solutions that allow students to take advantage of mobility opportunities without having to delay their study, as well as to introduce international mobility more and encourage students to use it. In addition, the panel recommends that efforts should be made to invite more international teachers and specialist to share their knowledge and experience, and thereby bring internationalization to the study programs and the Institute of Social Studies.

There are some differences in the quality of the programs or teaching groups that are discussed in detail within the chapters for each study programme, as well as the recommendations specified for each study programme.

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

### 1.3.1. Information Management (Prof HE)

#### 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

Since 2013, when the study programme was moved from Viljandi Culture Academy to Tartu, the curriculum has been restructured regularly and considerably. According to the self-evaluation report, the reason for the reforms has been to better meet changes in the labour market, economic considerations and efficiency in providing education. There has also been a need to differentiate the programme from the BA curriculum in Information Sciences at Tallinn University.

The current version of the Information Management curriculum (2016/17) was developed with the purpose of graduating students that are qualified for work in various information sectors (libraries, archive and museum management, that is memory institutions of society, and information and records management). The competencies of the occupational standards for both "Librarian, level 6" and "Records Manager, level 6" were taken into account in the curriculum development.

It was stressed that there are different organisational cultures as Tartu University has a long history in education and research whereas Viljandi has a more applied science perspective. Therefore it was perceived challenging to develop

information science degree programmes towards research-based education within the study programmes' group.

Further restructuring is expected to take place in the academic year 2018/2019, as the plan is to restructure the bachelor's degree programme. The restructured programme will join the information management and sociology competences with the aim of meeting the need for information and data analysts on the job market.

It is, furthermore, expected that the restructured programme will affect the current Information Management curriculum, which will be developed to become more practically oriented. In the interviews it was mentioned that currently there is comparison with international related study programmes going on.

The coordination of the curricula and study process is led by Programme Directors. A Programme Council which includes representatives of students and employers acts as advisory bodies of the curricula. To ensure the coherence of the study programme and avoid overlaps between courses, the content, learning outcomes, assessment methods and criteria of each course is discussed in the Chair of the Information Studies. To further strengthen the process, in autumn 2016 seminars were launched where the teaching staff meet and introduce their subjects. The whole procedure seems to be well developed. However, during the interviews it was stated that meetings were time-consuming from the perspective of conducting research as part of an academic's tasks.

As the present curriculum only started in the academic year 2016/2017 it is too early to evaluate the success of it. However, when the team interviewed employers it was confirmed that they feel that the development of the programs matches well with the needs and demands of the labour market and society.

### Strengths

- Pursuing to meet the changing needs of the labour markets in Estonia
- Comparison with related international study programmes during the development process
- Practice of joint development across disciplinary boundaries helps when resources are limited

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- As indicated during the interview with the academic staff expected decisions to be made soon instead of joint discussions which had been going on for too long and the meetings were perceived to take too much time to learn from each other's past and future interests.
- The professional profile of graduates could possibly be wider, or have other related profiles e.g. related to the needs of open science and universities and other research institutions. Also the other issues related to big data could be more clearly indicated in the profile.
- Focusing the content of the study programme more towards task-related human information behaviour and practices, and work-related information

literacy. Both of these would strengthen the information science component of the programme and match well with the overall information environment in this context, that is, organisations and networks formed by their activities. Also the information users' perspective could be embedded into these.

## 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

Both the self-assessment report (p. 19) and the site visit assured the team that Tartu University's resources are adequate for the needs of the Prof HE degree programme. The premises and lectures and seminar rooms are adequate, and there are enough computer labs. Students use their own computers and laptops for studying and homework.

The Library of Social Sciences provides access to 130 leading scientific electronic databases and also to main local databases. Moreover the Social Science Data Archive is located in the same premises. There is a national infrastructure development project (HITSA) focusing on ICT-skills underway and funding has been applied from the European Union. During the site-visit it became evident that the Library's services are valued and the possibility of getting quite personalised services was stressed as a positive feature.

Electronic learning environments are utilised, such as Moodle, which is mentioned in the report and was brought up in the interviews. Besides learning material available in print also digital material are offered access to, for example, Information Science ABC, which is designed to support teaching (p. 18). An internship website which is administered by the Institute of Social Studies supports the process of finding a place to intern. Internship supervisors are unpaid.

### Strengths

- Sharing of resources
- Internal supervisors are committed and ready to provide their teaching for free

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Due to the nature of the study programme it is recommended to ensure that the digital study and research environment is constantly kept up-to-date.

## **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

At the interview with the teachers it was noted that one of the most important aspect of moving the study program from Viljandi to Tartu is that the Institute of Social Study is very interdisciplinary. This opens up the possibility to include more transferable skills into to the program (e.g. methodology, interpersonal skills, learning capabilities, laws, and social change). The possibility to strengthen the transfer of skills during studies was appreciated also by the students and the employers in the interviews. In addition, it created better access to practical workplaces.

The teachers, however, also mentioned that there are some difficulties at interconnecting theoretical and practical knowledge. The program is applied in nature, a value brought from Viljandi Culture Academy which is also strengthened by the fact that a high number of students are already working in the field. The practical orientation of the curriculum is therefore strong. According to the self-evaluation report there is a big volume of internship courses where the focus is on learning-by-doing. The practical orientation is further supported through the participation of part time teachers who work as practitioners in the field.

Practical training through internship is 15% of the study programme, as according to the Higher Education Standard. According to the self-evaluation report cooperation with internship providers is good and students have been able to find internship that fits their interest. Different forms of internship has been

arranged to offer flexible solutions that meet the needs of the students. At the visit students appeared to be content with the arrangement.

At the University of Tartu the recognition for prior learning and work experience is governed by regulations and procedure approved by the university senate. An example of how this is implemented in the study programme is that students can have their prior work experience taken into account by crediting it toward internship requirements. This possibility has been particularly valuable for the Open University because they have more problems at taking time off from work to do their internship, and often work in the field.

At the teachers meeting the team learned that the institute has limited the contact hours for lectures. The intention is instead to use more time to focus on feedback for the students. More emphasis will be also put on using e-studies and digital tools together with lectures in some courses.

In the interviews it was explained that the students have the options of writing a thesis or taking a final exam, which was valued by students in the interview. At the Prof HE level this is an opportunity for the students to graduate on time instead of working with an independent study and writing a report, which might take more time. However, writing a graduation paper and conducting a related empirical study would provide a stronger foundation for those students who will continue their studies at a master's degree programme and possibly further at a doctoral degree programme.

### Strengths

- Flexibility provided for students to study and work at the same time.
- Synergy that is gained through studying and working at the same time.
- Both increase possibilities to adapt to jobs at labour markets fast after graduation.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Reconsidering the role of the options for completing the studies: a final exam or a thesis.

## **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

Following the structural change in 2013, the move from Viljandi affected the teaching staff with a major change. Currently there is only one staff member remaining of 10 previous teachers from Viljandi. In our opinion this is a gap in the academic teaching staff, who are qualified in information science. This gap has been filled with practitioners from the field, who are graduates from the programmes, and they are employed as part-time teachers. Therefore, we can only conclude that the academic profile of Information Science needs to be strengthened and that it is urgent to find a solution to this problem in the near future.

The team concludes that the structural change that was made in 2013, when the study program was moved from Viljandi to Tartu, opened up the opportunity to develop more research-based knowledge in information science, on interdisciplinary basis, and to integrate it into the study programmes and the courses. However, the self-evaluation report acknowledges the need for increased research activity of the staff as well as for their teaching to be more knowledge based. At the meetings with the teachers this was discussed and it was confirmed that a high teaching workload has, at least to some extent, been a hindrance. In particular for the younger staff members, their workload has reduced their possibilities to become more engaged with research work. The plan put forward in the self-evaluation report, to support younger staff by engaging them in research activity in the other chairs and working groups in the Institute of Social Studies, is regarded as positive by the team. Nevertheless, it is also necessary and recommended by the team that solutions should be found that provide members of the staff with more time for research activity.

During the visit, both teachers and students mentioned difficulties related to students feedback which is gathered through the SIS. Because students are not required to evaluate all courses the outcome from the system cannot be regarded as reliable. To compensate for this, teachers strive to discuss the curriculum and teaching with students regularly, so that problems can be solved and improvements made on a running basis. In addition, the self-evaluation report states that development seminars have been held in 2015 and 2016 where students have had the possibility to provide feedback by participating in focus groups. At meetings with both teachers and students it was confirmed that the students feedback had been taken into account and improvements made when needed. In general students are satisfied with the teaching and the interaction with the teaching staff.

### Strengths



- The options for multidisciplinary provision of courses are good.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Support staff to become more engaged in research work, particularly younger staff.
- The academic profile of Information Science needs to be strengthened and that it is urgent to find a solution to this problem in the near future.
- It is also necessary and recommended by the team that solutions should be found that provide members of the staff with more time for research activity.

### **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 self-evaluation report shows a positive development in the number of students in the study programme. For the regular study programme the number of candidates and enrolled students has increased since 2014. Although, the number of candidates for the Open University part of the programme has diminished compared with what it was in 2013, when the study programme was moved from Viljandi, the number of students enrolled has increased somewhat since 2014.

According to the self-evaluation report student dropout is relative low. At the meeting with teachers the team was told that the dropout rate mainly comes from people who are working and with families. Teachers have tried to support them by offering flexible solutions, for example the possibility to do some of the course work during the summer. Students in the regular part of the programme have been successful at graduating in nominal time, with a rate 71% of students. In the Open University the rate is lower, or 50%. The team agrees with the self-evaluation report that this can be regarded as quite good result for a group of students who work beside their study, as well as having family obligations. Nevertheless, it is recommended that solutions should be sought to support students to continue their study and complete it in a shorter period of time. The team, however, recognizes that it may not be an easy task, particularly as it is

imperative that the potential solutions will not diminish the quality of the student work or the programme.

The team concludes that the student places are filled with motivated and capable students. At the meeting with students and alumni the team found the students to be in general satisfied with the programme and the teachers who were considered to be supportive. The self-evaluation report claims that, in addition to a good share of Open University students who work in the field, about 83-85% of graduates are hired in positions related to the speciality following graduation, which must be considered to be a good result. At meetings with representatives of the employers it was confirmed that they were generally satisfied with the graduates and consider them to have sufficient competencies.

According to the self-evaluation report, the Institute of Social Studies has concluded a number of Erasmus agreement to support international mobility. Thus far it is clear that an insufficient number of students use international mobility and an effort is needed to encourage them to use the mobility opportunities. Flexible solutions should be sought that allow students to take advantage of international mobility without having to postpone their study. Such a solution could be, for example, the idea stated by the vice-dean about the plans for improving student mobility by finding foreign partner universities with similar profiles to enable accepting and crediting studies conducted abroad without requiring additional work from students when back at home university. These study packages were called 'mobility windows'.

### Strengths

- Motivated, promising students
- Work often related to the field of study.
- Promising plans to increase international mobility though mobility windows.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- To find new solutions to make students graduate on time
- Thus far it is clear that an insufficient number of students use international mobility and an effort is needed to encourage them to use the mobility opportunities.

## 1.3.2. Information and Knowledge Management (MA)

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

✓ <u>Standards</u>
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- ✓ 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

As mentioned before (chapter about Information Management) the team agrees with the self-evaluation report that the structural changes in 2013, when the Information Science program was moved from Viljandi to Tartu, have opened up the opportunity to develop a study programme with a curriculum that is more interdisciplinary. In the Information and Knowledge Management programme, this has been done with support from other relevant disciplines. The programme opened in the 2012/2013 academic year and according to the self-evaluation report the curriculum has been under development since then, with changes made to it every year. In the 2016/2017 version of the curriculum an emphasis is on information and data analysis.

The team considers the programme in many ways to be timely to meet the needs of the Estonian society. However, as the present curriculum only started in the academic year 2016/2017 it is too early to evaluate the success of it.

The team, nevertheless points out that the information science component of the programme should be stronger. The team suggests two possible solutions for this. Firstly, it is recommended that co-operation with Tallinn University, where there is highly qualified and professional academic staff that could add strength to the programme by teaching about information science, should be examined. This should be possible by distance teaching. Secondly, a tighter collaboration with sociology at the Institute of Social Study might be beneficial, as the identity of social sciences is strong in information studies. In addition, this might increase the local strength of the programmes and enable responding to current needs of Estonian society related to memory organisations and labour market.

### Strengths

- More information science content to strengthen the content of the programme and the qualifications of students from the perspective of future labour market needs
- Great demand for knowledge management competence on the labour market
- Interdisciplinary orientation of the curriculum

- Focus on development of analytical skills and competencies

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Focusing the content of the study programme more towards task-related human information behaviour and practices, and work-related information literacy. Both of these would strengthen the information science component of the programme and match well with the overall information environment in this context, that is, organisations and networks formed by their activities. Also the information users' perspective could be embedded into these.
- Examine possibilities of co-operation with Tallinn University, where there is highly qualified and professional academic staff that could add strength to the programme by teaching about information science
- Tighter collaboration with sociology at the Institute of Social Study
- Because of the frequent changes in the curriculum a period of stability and consistency is recommended
- To find and apply better teaching methods supporting reconciliation of work and studies
- To create the "mobility windows" in the curriculum to enable easier short term international studies

### **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

Tartu University's resources are adequate for the needs of the teaching and learning in this degree programme. The premises, lecture and seminar rooms and computer labs are adequate. Students have their own computers and laptops for studying and completing assignments at home.

Access is provided to 130 leading scientific electronic databases and also to main local databases by the Library of Social Sciences. The Social Science Data Archive is located in the same premises. A national infrastructure development project (HITSA) focusing on ICT-skills is underway. Funding is being sought from the

European Union. The Library's services are valued, this became evident during the site-visit.

Electronic learning environments, such as Moodle, are heavily utilised. Learning material available in print and in digital format, for example, Information Science ABC is designed to support teaching (p. 18). An internship website which is administered by the Institute of Social Studies supports the process of finding a place to intern. Internship supervisors are unpaid.

### Strengths

- Adequate infrastructure
- Utilisation of digital learning environments and providing access to a range of digital learning material to support self-study
- Adequate access to library services and archival data in social sciences

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Funding for maintaining and developing the infrastructure needs to be ensured in order to keep digital teaching and learning environments, including tools, materials and services, up-to-date.

## **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

As previously explained, the curriculum for the study programme only started in 2016/2017 and it is not possible to evaluate how successful it is at this point of time. At the teachers meeting the team learned that the institute has limited the

contact hours for lectures. The intention is instead to use more time to focus on students learning and feedback for the students. More emphasis will be also put on using e-studies and digital tools together with lectures in some courses. Theoretical knowledge is interconnected with practical skills through the participation of the internship partners. Compulsory practical training through internship is 9 ECTS. According to the self-evaluation report cooperation with internship providers is good and students have been able to find internship that fits their interest. Different forms of internship has been arranged to offer flexible solutions that meet the needs of the students. At the visit students appeared to be content with the arrangement.

At the University of Tartu the recognition for prior learning and work experience is governed by regulations and procedure approved by the university senate. An example of how this is implemented in the study programme is that students can have their prior work experience taken into account by crediting it toward internship requirements.

A collaboration with other study fields has been initiated, e.g. by joint teaching of research methodology, and with computer scientists who are involved in the teaching, which the team regards to be positive. However, as has been noted before, there is a need for more teaching related to information science.

In the interviews it was explained that the students have the options of writing a thesis or taking a final exam, which was valued by students in the interview. This may provide the students an opportunity to graduate on time. However, from the viewpoint of proving qualifications for doctoral studies the option of an exam without conducting a study and writing a report is a concern.

### Strengths

- Positive collaboration with new teaching staff from other fields, particularly joint teaching of research methodology, and with computer scientists taking part in the teaching, works well
- Theoretical knowledge and practical skills are interconnected through the participation of internship partners

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The information science component of the programme should be stronger
- Flexible solutions that may help to encourage students to use mobility opportunities are needed
- Students need support to continue their study in order to lower the drop-out rate, as well as allowing them to complete their study in a shorter period of time than they have been doing so far
- Students pursuing towards doctoral studies should have their MA thesis done instead of a final exam.

## 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

As has been previously mentioned (chapter about Information Management programme), the team is worried about the situation with the academic staff of the Information Science programmes. The fact that only one staff member is remaining of 10 previous teachers from Viljandi has in our opinion created a gap in the academic teaching staff, who are qualified in information science. The team can only conclude that the academic profile of information science needs to be strengthened and that it is urgent to find a solution to this problem in the near future.

The structural changes in 2013 when the programme was moved to Tartu have opened up the opportunity to develop more research-based knowledge in information science on interdisciplinary basis and to integrate it into the study programmes and the courses. However, the self-evaluation report acknowledges the need for increased research activity for the younger staff members as well as for their teaching to be more knowledge based. As was described in the chapter about the Information Management programme the team recommends that a solution that provides the staff with more time for research activity should be found. The plan put forward in the self-evaluation report, to support younger staff by engaging them in research activity in the other chairs and working groups in the Institute of Social Studies, is regarded as positive.

The feedback gathered through the SIS has already been discussed in the chapter about Information Management. The same solutions as described there have been applied by teachers in this programme. During the visit students confirmed that their feedback had been taken into account and improvements made when needed. In general students are satisfied with the teaching and the interaction with the teaching staff.

### Strengths

- The possibility to utilise qualified staff members from the other fields, such as computer science, communication science, sociology on multidisciplinary basis.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Recruitment of new staff who are qualified in the field of information science.
- A solution that provides the staff with more time for research activity should be found. The plan put forward in the self-evaluation report, to support younger staff by engaging them in research activity in the other chairs and working groups in the Institute of Social Studies, is regarded as positive.

### **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 self-evaluation report states that the number of students has dropped below the threshold of sustainability established in the University. Nevertheless, the report also shows that there has been a steady increase in the number of candidates and enrolled students since 2014.

However, the dropout rate is too high and the share of students who graduate in the standard period of study in 2013/2014 is low, or only 27%. Although it may be difficult to deal with some of the reasons for this, particularly the fact that many students work beside their study and some of them have also family obligations, the team can only recommend that solutions that support students at continuing their study and completing it in a shorter period of time should be sought. The self-evaluation report mentions the need to improve the use of e-study resources the support adult students who have work responsibilities and the team agrees with this suggestion.



At meetings with students they confirmed that their expectations about the programme are being met and in general they expressed a satisfaction with it. The team found the students to be capable and motivated to learn.

According to the self-evaluation report, the Institute of Social Studies has concluded a number of Erasmus agreement to support international mobility. Nevertheless, in the period 2013-2016, international mobility has been non-existent among Information and Knowledge Management students. At the meetings with students and alumni the team was told that the main reason for this lack of interest is that many students work beside their study and their personal situations make it difficult for them to study abroad. Currently, one application for international mobility has been submitted and accepted. However, it is clear that a major effort is needed to come up with flexible solutions that may encourage students to use the mobility opportunities.

### Strengths

- Graduated students are perceived as competent staff with new perspectives in the labour markets
- Students themselves are motivated and pleased with their studies

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Solutions that support students at continuing their study and completing it in a shorter period of time should be sought.
- It is clear that a major effort is needed to come up with flexible solutions that may encourage students to use the mobility opportunities.

## 1.3.3. Journalism and Communication (BA)

### **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 University Development Plan focuses on setting up research-led curricula. The Faculty of Social Sciences, heterogeneous in nature, has undergone a lot of structural reforms. A clear attempt is made to create networks of co-operation and synergy among the teaching and research staff, but this is still a work in progress. The Faculty currently has about 4,000 courses on offer: the goal is to compose more thematic and interdisciplinary clusters while ensuring that in all of those areas research is feeding into teaching. Orientation on selected international examples emerged as a guiding principle in this exercise. Striking the right balance between theory and practice throughout the curricula is considered crucial; so is finding the balance between teaching and research among the staff. As an outcome, the curriculum stresses the development of critical thinking and communication skills with an implied audience as target, as these are the binding elements between the journalism and communication-oriented components. The organizational culture is friendly: teaching staff and students communicate openly. When problems arise, these are tackled at the level where the problem occurs.

### Strengths

- The Journalism and Communication team sits within Social Sciences and there is a long history of media courses at the University. By adopting new strategies to meet the demands of both educational and journalistic markets. The successful blending of traditional and contemporary outlooks, and balancing the needs of various stakeholders, means that the programmes are well-regarded in world rankings.
- The focus of teaching is on learning initiated by students; self-assessment; and meta-cognitive processes about learning. General quality aspects of teaching supported by digital technology are being developed: e.g. e-learning through high-quality e-lectures and developing MOOCs that are meant to provide higher flexibility for the students, enabling them to work more online at their own pace, thus leading to an increased student engagement.
- Study process: extra modules are timetabled each semester to ensure students get more choice of electives. This is to compensate for the shrinking number of options available due to funding cuts.
- Expecting students to take responsibility for their own learning; using innovative techniques, for e.g. peer to peer feedback, and getting students to make study plans with guidance from tutors are empowering strategies.
- Clear, innovative support for research students embarking on thesis preparation. Feedback on essays or thesis work is detailed, thanks to a relatively small number of students and relatively sufficient staff.
- The idea of a Research Fair where all supervisory staff are on hand to discuss their work and encourage discussion with students in order for them to make good research topic choices, is excellent.

- Common first year, followed by students choosing a specialism shows good understanding of the ways in which the journalistic and communications industries share similar practices and synergy. Though this strategy was born out of a need to cut costs, it is a sound one in terms of preparing students for employability in communications industries.
- Notwithstanding the serious workload of the teaching staff, feedback mechanisms are numerous, effective and appreciated as such by the students.
- Efforts are made to live up to the University of Tartu's reputation as the longest established and the best in the country. The students that the commission had a chance to talk to recognize the programme's quality: several of them, while admitted to the programme in Tallinn and Tartu, decided to enroll in the Tartu programme because of its reputation and academic spirit.
- Employers interviewed pointed out changes in curriculum and study process have resulted noticeable improvement in students' skills and competences ("*Students are better than 5 years ago and much-much better than 10 years ago*").

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The loss of Open University provision has altered the demographic. Students are younger and there are no mature students on the BA. This requires careful monitoring as it may have an impact on the teaching, assessment and learning approaches. Staff need to be supported through this adaptation of focus.
- While the dropout numbers have gone down considerably, the graduation rate at the BA level is strikingly lower than at the MA level. Study efficiency is an area of paramount concern: the student population tends to combine study with work, so BA courses should take into account the working reality of the students while indicating the limits of flexibility that the staff is willing and able to offer.
- The Assessors noticed greater satisfaction among the students talked to with the journalism components of study than with the communication components of the BA programme.
- Taking an example in the competence acquired in the field of competitive research grant proposal writing, more structural collaboration with carefully chosen partners across Europe could be sought to set up double and joint degrees (e.g. strategic partnerships, Key Action 2 and 3 as part of Erasmus +) and ensure mobility schemes as well as grants for students.
- The quality assurance system has undergone a number of changes over the last years. Stability of the system and a good balance between closed and open questions in the evaluation feedback module, allowing for longitudinal comparison, should be strived for.
- The methods of student evaluation on their experience vary considerably. Establishing meetings of teachers once per semester to discuss a module's exam questions and rationales behind them in terms of assessing content, comprehension and application may be helpful.
- Although the University of Tartu as a national university should continue to offer its study programmes in the Estonian language, more content

should be offered in English so as to make the programme more attractive for international students and to create a space for “internationalization at home” for the native learners. The programme would benefit from a clearer strategy as to offering classes in other foreign languages such as Finnish, German and Russian. Whether curriculum content should be offered in a foreign language or whether language courses should be more generic could be part of a thorough discussion among the staff, alumni and the working field.

- Changes have rapidly followed one another over the last four to five years. A phase of consolidation should be striven for.
- A mere 3% of students go abroad to study. This is an insufficient number. The student mobility window, allowing students to study abroad, is a step in the right direction, although it still remains sub-optimal. Students who study abroad should not be sanctioned with longer study duration because of compulsory courses to be taken up in the home university that are not on offer in the semester upon their return. More flexibility is needed as well as more trust in the quality of the selected host institutions where equivalent course content could be taken up. Establishing an internationalization group among members of the teaching team, who would liaise with overseas universities, would be advantageous.
- Although connections with the employers are good, those links could be strengthened. Ways to do this are numerous: e.g. by organizing compulsory training periods in both regional and national companies and media outlets, by inviting practitioners with a knack for educating future generations of communication specialists and media workers to join forces with the core teaching staff and act as co-teachers with the aim to illustrate theories, comment on production cultures, bring in industrial practice and reflexivity, etc.

## 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

Over the last five years, the university has undergone a series of structural and institutional changes. Added to the merger of several departments in 2013, and restructure in 2015, there has also been a change in the way in which Higher Education is funded and in how many credits students must pass within a specified framework in order to progress. The new funding strategy does not compensate for the loss of income generated by fee-paying students and this is having an impact on hard and soft resources and the ability to plan ahead (pp13-14). There is a clear State funding approach to allocating resources: recruitment;

number of graduating students; and how many credits students take each year. However, low graduation and low recruitment rates are impacting on finances detrimentally. That 60% of this allocation is for credits being studied may cause strategically-minded staff to put efforts into this rather than completion rates and recruitment. The Ministry of Education should look at the way that certain actions are prioritized in its funding model.

In looking at Journalism and Communications BA and MA provision, it is clear that the intention of the restructure to provide scope for sharing best practices and deeper interdisciplinary education and collaboration between disciplines is being fulfilled. However, as with any major change, there needs to be a bedding in period. That this is happening is evident in the assessment report which shows evidence of institutional reflexivity based upon student and staff feedback of the current situation and a careful evaluation of what is being offered in order to make the institution relevant for staff, students and the wider world. It is clear that changes to the funding of Higher Education, in which State funding is predicated on the needs of the external market place is continuing to impact on student numbers and staffing of social science-focused provision. The frustration of staff with the current situation with regard to the Government's giving low funding priority to Journalism and Communication programmes, added to the fact that young people do not need HE qualifications in order to become professional journalists, is evident. This is having a detrimental effect on recruitment of research active staff, resourcing and attracting students.

### Strengths

- The department has responded to the challenges brought by lack of financial resources by introducing innovating teaching and assessment practice, which accords well with its tradition of providing Open University courses. The decision to apply some of the techniques used in delivering OU courses – for e.g. weekend, block teaching and e-study is a creative, sound pedagogical strategy to resource issues and one which appears to be welcomed by students on BA and MA programmes who also study.
- The removal of the OU courses has freed up some staff time and energy (52)
- Study process: extra modules are timetabled each semester to ensure students get more choice of electives – this is to compensate for the shrinking number of options available due to funding cuts.
- Enabling masters students to pass on their knowledge to others at BA level though training and support is a good way of making up for high tutor workloads, it also inspires undergraduates, and enables masters students to 'bring innovations into the teaching process and lower the staff workloads.' (21)
- Sustainability: encouraging BA students to stay on and complete masters programmes.

- Facilities in classrooms and news studios were very good.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Presently the department is operating at a financial deficit and the teaching budget is being supplemented by research funding.
- Lower rates of student satisfaction with large group teaching, lectures conducted as teamwork, but overall are good (33). The situation regarding large group teaching etc, should continue to be monitored closely.
- Optionality has been streamlined due to cuts in funding, as have contact hours. This needs to be monitored to ensure students are not missing out (19).
- In order to support students in developing autonomy, and introducing newer teaching practice, the department wants to introduce a more "systematic development plan" for staff. However, there is insufficient funding for this. 'unmanaged development' (20) may work for some staff, but sometimes students react negatively when 'some inefficiency is detected' in the teaching methods of other tutors. This needs remedying to ensure parity of experience and ensure student satisfaction in teaching and learning is good.
- Encouraging a higher graduation and completion rate to ensure the programmes do not miss out on Government funding.
- Issues with the renovation of the University library is impacting on the student experience and getting this matter addressed should be a priority.
- E-study approaches to teaching can save money and are welcomed by students, but there needs to be a coherent approach in terms of ensuring all modules have this provision. Tutors also need to be aware that students completing online assessment also want good levels of feedback and guidance on work submitted.
- Low pay levels and high workloads are impacting on staff morale, health and recruiting research-active practitioners into Higher Education employment. Most staff have to supplement their university pay by working elsewhere.

## **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 University of Tartu has the longest tradition of teaching journalism and communication in Estonia. The studies are easily linked with the other programmes and opportunities that such an established university can offer. Journalism and communication programmes are linked together at BA level, which makes it possible to teach both specialties at lower cost and give the students a chance to be prepared for a wider range of jobs. Concerning was the lack of excitement and enthusiasm in the atmosphere in these areas: possibilities for development, pessimism about the finances, limited contacts with employers and other stakeholders and vice versa about the necessity of having to work together to provide market-facing, yet academic, provision.

### Strengths

- The Journalism and Communication team sits within Social Sciences and there is a long history of media courses. By adopting new strategies to meet the demands of the education and journalistic markets, the blend of old and new methodologies in relation to learning and teaching mean the programmes are well-regarded in world rankings (15-16).
- The study programme has a good balance between practical and theoretical studies, especially for students who are focused on journalism.
- In addition to the standard assessment system, students receive other forms of feedback and their analytical thinking is encouraged in the learning process.
- Students can flexibly choose during almost the whole study period whether they want to focus on journalism or on communication. This is valuable for those entering the University without a clear notion of which career path to follow.
- Students can independently choose their own organisation for an internship. The internship period is often extended and often leads to employment.
- University staff are aware that many students are working and they try to be supportive and flexible.
- The University has a fairly well functioning mechanism to detect academic fraud.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Greater development of audio-visual skills and use of e-study is recommended. As e-learning possibilities are limited, teaching staff needs

more information on how it can improve the learning process without creating extra workload for teachers; only few courses offer audio/video lectures online.

- Communication students have relatively less possibilities to practice their skills during the first study years compared to journalists.
- Students are doing most of their practical training in classrooms, publishing their own website or local radio. Their best works could be better 'sold' to nationwide press, radio/tv/web channels.
- Engaging practitioners in the teaching process is too random. Setting up an industry liaison group that consists of media practitioners and academic staff may be worthwhile.
- Employers pointed out stronger need to improve students' feel of professional identity (both of a journalist and a communication specialist). Closer relations with the industry and future employers during internship would be a valuable tool (*"University should send out more students to editorial offices, hand-on training. It would give students better understanding what journalism is about, how news organisation operates and how to fit in."*).
- Encourage student mobility by ensuring foreign language delivery and working with others at universities overseas to ensure curriculum fit.

## 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



Recent structural changes in Tartu University and in the Institute of Social Studies have forced teaching staff to be flexible, open to quick changes and to actively participate in reshaping the study process and developing a new organizational culture. Besides better co-operation, teaching synergy and interdisciplinarity of study, changes have resulted also in great emotional stress and a feeling of insecurity among teachers. The process of constant change has been described as 'long and exhausting' and a great need for stability is shared with the Commission. Also changes in the study programmes have resulted in bigger workload for some lecturers.

As salaries of teachers are not competitive in comparison with specialists working in the industry, teachers often pointed to the need to make sacrifices concerning personal academic career or development, and also described their work as a mission. Steps should be taken on the university level to ease the feeling of social insecurity among teaching staff and support teachers in the building and maintaining of their professional careers (through a tenure track system).

Rapid changes in society have also caused a greater need to adjust the study process to meet the new challenges of the industry. However, getting input from the stakeholders is described as a challenge. Possibilities to engage practitioners in the teaching process are limited due to financial reasons (as the financial situation of the Institute is precarious, it is impossible to pay competitive salaries). Practitioners also struggle with the university's education academic standards as well as with the administrative burden and the academic bureaucracy. So the practitioners participating in the teaching process (visiting lectures and seminars) are mostly motivated from a sense of mission. Workload/salary ratio is not competitive, so this needs to be looked at because relying on goodwill or volunteerism of staff may mean the teaching base is unstable. However, at present, the Institute has chosen to organize the teaching mostly by attracting regular academic staff, and uses teachers from outside only for teaching skills and competences that are not available 'in-house'. Such an approach demands from the teaching staff great efforts to stay up-to-date with the latest developments in a rapidly changing communication industry. Students value their lecturers as recognized experts in the field. Working with professionals is seen as a strong motivation also by the teaching staff. Teachers see the importance of the industry's view: the connection of lecturers with the latest industry developments is seen as a valuable tool to meet the needs of a changing media landscape and get better input on skills and competences needed.

The Institute has improved its relations with the practitioners, who are eager to give guest lectures and share their knowledge and experience. Several formats of meeting with the industry (webinars, internships, employer's fair, etc.) have been developed by the Institute and are welcomed by stakeholders.

Steps should be taken to help students to build and improve their professional identity, as students value the participation of practitioners as experts and role models. It also forces the Institute to be more open and actively developing closer professional contacts and dialogue with the industry (in-depth interviews with stakeholders, cooperation regarding internships, meetings with

policymakers). Employers interviewed have pointed out the gap between the institute and the industry and the need for a more open and more regular dialogue. The proposition was made to develop a programme to integrate practitioners into the study process (master classes, case studies, research collaboration) in closer co-operation with stakeholders. The appointment of a staff member responsible for keeping the connections with the industry was recommended both by the employers and the teachers.

The teachers' workload has increased because the student population is very diverse in terms of previous knowledge - especially with reference to the Masters programme. Hence, the difference in their learning capacities is growing. To tackle this problem, collective teaching is being introduced in some courses, so that the workload can be divided and resources can be better managed. More experienced colleagues are supporting those with less experience. MA students are also involved in the teaching process at the BA level.

The overall atmosphere of the workplace is good according to the teachers interviewed. The University supports the development of teaching skills, by organising regular training for lecturers and offering a career and support system, including also psychological counselling. A need for more personal supervision, support in teaching, language and feedback skills, and how to use plagiarism detection programmes was communicated during the interviews. Due to the high workload, staff admitted that it was sometimes problematic to find the time and motivation to participate in self-development initiatives.

Besides formal feedback via SIS, teachers continue to gather qualitative feedback from students, using different methods, from class-based discussions to focus group meetings to evaluation being tied to assessment. This means that changes in the study process can be quickly implemented. This kind of open and direct feedback is much valued among teachers.

The Commissioners welcome the recent change in the lecturers' (professors') selection process – five-year contracts are being replaced with permanent contracts with assessment every five years. This has given teachers more confidence; job and social security of teaching staff has to be strongly improved.

Students value the experience of being supervised by MA students. During interviews with BA students of JOURCOM students said that MA students participate a) during reporting course as editors and peers of BA students' news and b) as opponents of bachelor's theses (graduation thesis, SHZU.00,024, p 123); and as editors of news written by them. (*"They have more time than professors have and they focus more on our development"*). MA students also value the mentoring experience and training they receive in order to carry out these tasks.

### Strengths

- The Journalism and Communication BA curriculum has set a goal to provide students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills to work as a reporter, spokesperson or public relations specialist. Combining

- these two areas requires from the teaching staff both academic competency and detailed knowledge of the industry.
- Structural changes at the University have given the Institute the opportunity of a more interdisciplinary approach to studies (the Chair of Information Sciences has contributed to search and information competences of the students, for example) and this collegial approach has been welcomed and opened up opportunities for enhanced provision.
  - The end of Open University teaching has resulted in a different student audience (i.e. the average student has become younger). The abandonment of Open University structure has freed time and energy to use for personal academic development and research.
  - The workload issue arises especially for practical courses. (*"To be practical, you have to divide 75 students into 6 groups to work with. It means you have to spend 6 times more time. But you cannot limit the number of participants as this would mean less income to the Institute."*). Lecturers are working with MA students during the study process, thus giving the latter pedagogical training, to review BA theses and to give feedback, but also to alleviate the burden on teachers. Both – teachers and MA students – highly appreciate this process.
  - Students value the personal approach and possibility to get personal feedback from teachers and professors. *"They've set high standards for feedback and feel frustrated when these standards are not met."* Accessibility to professors and teachers and small teaching groups are also valued as strengths of the curriculum. The help and support from study co-ordinators are pointed out by the students in the most positive way.
  - The organisational culture of the Institute, open communication between students and professors, helpfulness and cooperativeness of educators are considered to be of high quality by the students. (*"The study process is more personal. In X (a partner institute abroad) you were part of a mass, and here it is not the case."*).
  - Best teaching practices are shared among colleagues both in formal and informal ways. Feedback is gathered from SIS (still considered too formal and uninformative by students and teaching staff) and through personal qualitative interviews. Teachers also use group interviews to get information about the study process. Feedback information is being communicated to the programme co-ordinator. Staff also share best practice with peers when students give high feedback scores to their modules (55).

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Teachers of Journalism BA have a strong academic and research background as well as a strong idea of what skills and competences should be acquired during studies. They value close contacts with the industry, especially teaching practical subjects, (*"If you don't work [in the industry], you don't know how to teach"*) but admit more work has to be done to maintain and develop these contacts and give educators also a possibility

- to keep up with industry developments. The Institute has managed to maintain good contacts with teaching practitioners and to engage alumni in the teaching process. Contacts with stakeholders are also maintained by practitioners participating in the university's admission interviews. The Institute has also attracted teachers from other higher education institutes.
- The professional motivation of lecturers is high, but supported mostly by a strong sense of mission (*"If I'm loyal to my profession, I cannot let them [students] go without getting knowledge", "I'll do this [teaching] even if I will not be paid or given enough time", "I'm proud of my work"*). Teachers pointed out excessive workload, the need to make concessions regarding their personal life or academic development (*"I had to quit the job for my PhD". "I have my private company to support my teaching",*) the poor reputation of the teacher's job (*"There is no queue at the door [to teach in university]"*) and the non-competitive salaries which do not reflect the amount of work and high qualification requirements set by university standards.
  - The Institute encourages younger teachers to improve their teaching skills. The University offers a wide choice of courses on teaching, languages etc., as well as a career and support system (including psychological counselling) for lecturers. Teachers have communicated the need to be in closer contact with the industry. Some co-operation could be organized by reviewing the internship system and encouraging internship mentors to co-operate more closely with university tutors.
  - The possibilities of teachers to have a semester abroad (especially teaching abroad) are limited due to lack of resources. (*"We're working on zero resource level. We know, the policy is that teacher should get time for that. But if someone is leaving or goes abroad, others have to cover her/his teaching load."*)
  - As student possibilities for international mobility are limited, the Institute should make efforts to invite more international teachers and specialists to share their knowledge and experience ('internationalisation at home').

## 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 general picture is that the students are satisfied and are feeling honoured to study journalism in the University of Tartu. Students say: "*There is only one option for studying journalism in Estonia, and that is University of Tartu*". The number of students has decreased over the years. On the other side, there have been big changes since the last assessment period in the curriculum and in the organization of the Institute and Faculties. Still, in terms of student experience, the changes went smoothly and the students were largely satisfied with the process.

The curriculum is based mostly on theoretical knowledge and there are also few practitioners who are members of the teaching staff. The students the Assessors met pointed out that the University is giving them general knowledge and skills. However, because most students worked as well as studying, they felt the teaching staff need to be even more flexible in the organisation of learning and teaching.

In 2014, the opportunity to transfer exam results from a Moodle course to the exam records in the SIS was developed. However, students felt there are not enough e-courses that can be used by them during their studies.

The feedback system - Study Information System, gives the students opportunity to express their opinion over their courses. However, this only have to do this for a certain number of courses, and must do it otherwise they will not be allowed to enrol in the next phase of study. Students said this led some of them to just do it in a cursory fashion so they could move on. The students also pointed out that most of the teachers were using dialogue method for evaluating the courses, or some other unique methods - for e.g. some tutors used evaluation in action during term time at several points; others incorporated feedback into assessment; others held focus groups. However, the students shared with us the opinion that the teaching staff should explain the importance of giving feedback to every student in order to have more concrete comments. Also, the general picture is that the students need to be more informed of the institutional organisation of the University in order to know whom to address an issue if needed.

There have been cases with plagiarism since the last assessment period. However, the teaching staff is working on this issue, in terms of education, for e.g. a web resource has been created for evaluating the sources of information.

The students consider that they enjoy great resources for studying. However, one of the biggest problems is the small number of students who are going abroad. There is an issue with mobility. Though there is an Erasmus programme, some students (especially BA) were not aware of the programme or how to initiate the process. However, the University is trying hard to motivate them and has even started a policy of accepting ECTS credits for students who take modules at another European university abroad.

Though individual tutors stay in touch, and there are certain annual events, from this year, there is an Alumni group organized to help those graduating to stay in contact after University. The Alumni think that this is a great opportunity for practitioner alumni members to aid in keeping the curriculum up-to-date and assisting with internships and teaching.

Finding a place to do internship is hard for the students. The Institute doesn't participate very actively in organising internships ("Student has to stand for himself"), communicating the expectations of student and the Institute towards the internship, educating and motivating mentors. According to teachers interviewed, top managers of media organisations understand these needs and expectations, but middle-managers are under huge time pressure and unaware of needs of the study process and outcomes of internship.

Students also say they need help finding work after finishing studies. It is encouraging to hear that the University is organizing Employers Fair every year so that the students can stay in touch with the employers. One problem that we saw was the lack of interest from the employers for leading the development and mentoring of students while they are on practice in their premises.

Students want to have practical use and experience of the skills needed in the work-place. According to teachers and students interviewed often employers do not offer mentoring to students, students feel neglected. Also young interns are not satisfied with students' skills not used in best way during internship: they've been given most simple tasks, no feedback given etc. According to teachers there is a need to educate the employers and especially mentors in newsrooms about the skills and competences of interns, about the expectations of the institute and about methodology of giving intern a proper guidance and feedback.

Also the information of different needs, style and practices of different newsrooms should be better communicated to students. Also better guidance in choosing internship partners would be recommendable. (A set of regular internship partners with trained mentors, agreed expectations and outcomes and involving internship mentors in the evaluation of the internship). Students interviewed (that we met) find compulsory internship too short (minimum is 3 weeks) ("I did extra involuntary internship 1.5 years, and after it I started to understand the business".)

Students are not satisfied, that the internship is mostly graded based on student's self-evaluation and they did not know how the grading process worked. It is a missed opportunity that tutors' and employers' evaluation wasn't included in the grading system. More needs to be done between tutors and practitioners to co-ordinate internships and supervision of these whilst students are out in the field.

As internship in other towns or far from home could be costly, and as not all employers pay students for internship, some common practice about logistics and remuneration side of the internship should be negotiated with the industry policymakers and media organisations.

Also information about internship vacancies abroad should be better communicated to students.

### Strengths

- The students are active and visible during their studies. They are highly motivated and capable.
- The participation of practitioners in the selection procedure of students, admission interviews (p.58)
- The resources are helpful for the students and for their studies.
- Students have good possibilities to develop their practical skills (tv studio, broadcasting equipment, practical seminars etc.)

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Students attach higher value to subjects taught in smaller groups. With resources limited, larger class sizes and impact needs to be closely monitored.
- Low mobility of students to foreign universities is mirrored by low rates of overseas tutors. Even though the University is developing certain policies for changing that, the teaching staff should also be more focused on motivating the students for going abroad.
- The University should create and work on developing more e–courses so that the students can study from distance. This is very important for those students who try to combine working and studying.
- More practitioners should be involved in the courses; by doing that the students will learn from the best in the contemporary media field and will also develop networks with possible future employers.
- The students need to be more informed about the institutional hierarchy of the University in order to know to whom to address certain problems if there is a need for it.
- Teaching staff should explain the importance of giving feedback and work more on giving the students a clear picture that something has changed as a result of student feedback.
- Students would value more support getting their work published in the mainstream nationwide media.

### 1.3.4. Communication Management (MA), Journalism (MA)

#### 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

Following examples from abroad, both MA programs have been restructured. The goal was to pool resources and to make the architecture of the curriculum less complex, offering more clarity and less fragmentation, as well as more interdisciplinarity (e.g. more integration of courses from sociology, allowing more deepening of the methods and theory base). More skills oriented input from the working field as well as innovative course content such as data journalism in collaboration with the public broadcaster are strived for in the MA in Journalism. As the number of courses has been rationalized and contact hours have been reduced, more e-learning is on offer. The student population in both MA programs is diverse as only about half come straight from a BA. Both MA programs cater to people who work (e.g. all work part or full-time) and with life experience, some even acquiring a second master's degree. A considerably lower number of students graduate in time in the Journalism program (63%) compared to the Communication Management program (96%). This striking difference can be explained by the demanding combination of practice and theory in the Journalism MA for which time management and task prioritization are key. Demand for journalists in Estonia is falling and the skills needs of employers have risen. This reflects a world-wide issue for journalism education providers. In sum, it is clear that there is a level of frustration with market conditions and funding. The team sees itself as having a wider remit in line with the university's society-focused mission.

#### Strengths



- Study process: extra modules are timetabled each semester to ensure students get more choice of electives. This is to compensate for the shrinking number of options available due to funding cuts.
- Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning. Using modern techniques, e.g. peer-to-peer feedback, and getting students to make study plans with guidance from tutors are empowering strategies.
- Clear, innovative support for research students embarking on thesis preparation. The idea of a Research Fair where all supervisory staff are on hand to discuss their work and encourage discussion with students in order for them to make good research topic choices, is excellent.
- Enabling MA students to pass on their knowledge to others at BA level through training and support is a good way of inspiring undergraduates, enabling MA students to "bring innovations into the teaching process and lower the teachers' workloads." (21)
- The teaching staff is research-active even though budgeting the time for especially young lecturers proves to be difficult.
- Over 90% of students would recommend UT's Communication Management MA to a friend (62).
- Students constitute a good source of knowledge and network as three quarters work within media and communication industries.
- The Journalism MA is working towards providing continuing professional development for journalists in the industry and emphasizing that its graduates must take responsibility for their own life-long learning.
- The team illustrates a firm commitment to have an impact for the better on the culture and professional life of Estonia. They are knowledgeable and passionate about their subject and its importance, and are strong advocates for developing and providing a curriculum which is research-informed and has impact.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Due to curriculum changes, the number of modules taught in English in Journalism curriculum is being decreased. This may have an impact on attracting foreign tutors and stimulating foreign exchange study.
- It is hoped that the over-lap between some subjects will be solved by the restructuring of the curriculum.
- Marketing could gain prominence in the MA in Communication Management. This is considered a gap in the current programme, which could be remedied thanks to more synergy with the colleagues from Economics.

- Lack of language proficiency (e.g. Finnish, Russian) of graduates is seen as problematic by employers. Other gaps mentioned by the latter are online media skills, working under pressure, fast and adequate source finding, and budgeting for projects.
- The quick turnaround of the feedback system in place is praised by the students and alumni as it is not only meant for future generations of students but also for students currently enrolled.
- There are good opportunities for internships, although national (media) companies could be more prominent at the Employers' Fair.
- Employers as mentors are hard to find. In order for the curriculum to be relevant in a dynamic media marketplace, practitioners need to be more involved in the curriculum. There should also be greater dialogue between the teaching staff and the employment mentors in terms of tasks to be performed and skills to be mastered by the trainee. The mentor should also be asked to give input as part of the evaluation process for students on placement.
- The practitioners' input in the MA programmes should be increased.
- Some of the alumni the commission spoke to feared the lack of added value attributed to a master degree by the employers.
- The goal and learning outcomes (skills and competences) of JOUR MA study program (to prepare the students theoretically and practically for working successfully as editors in different media channels (91)) should be monitored and discussed with the industry representatives as employers were hesitant about the current situation (some principal disagreements occurred during the interviews considering main competences and future field of work of journalism MA graduates).

## 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

- Over the last five years, the university has undergone a series of structural and institutional changes. Added to this the merger of several

- departments in 2013, and restructure in 2015; there has also been a change in the way in which Higher Education is funded and in how many credits students must pass within a specified framework in order to progress. The new funding strategy does not compensate for the loss of income generated by fee-paying students and this is having an impact on hard and soft resources and the ability to plan ahead (pp13-14).
- In looking at Journalism and Communications MA provision, it is clear that the intention of the restructure to provide scope for sharing best practice and deeper interdisciplinary education and collaboration between disciplines is being fulfilled and that it is creating opportunities for curriculum development as well as challenges. The assessment report shows evidence of institutional reflexivity based upon student and staff feedback of the current situation and a careful evaluation of what is being offered in order to make the institution relevant for staff, students and the wider world. It is clear that changes to the funding of Higher Education, in which State funding is predicated on the needs of the external market place is continuing to impact on student numbers and staffing of social science-focused provision. The frustration of staff with the current situation with regard to the Government's giving low priority to Journalism and Communication programs; added to the fact that young people do not need HE qualifications in order to become professional journalists, is evident. This is having a detrimental effect on recruitment of research active staff, resourcing and attracting students.
  - While finance for research is still buoyant, some of this income is having to be spent on teaching which has gone some way towards mitigating the detrimental effect falling income is having on tutor workload and morale.

### Strengths

- working well to ensure collaborative practice and knowledge transfer have a positive impact on the student body.
- The department has responded to the challenges brought by lack of financial resources by introducing innovating teaching and assessment practice, which accords well with its tradition of providing Open University courses. The decision to apply some of the techniques used in delivering OU courses – for e.g. weekend, block teaching and e-study is a creative, sound pedagogical strategy to resource issues and one which appears to be welcomed by students on BA and MA programmes who also study. Provision of student-centred approach to learning – providing all course material at the start of term allows students the opportunity to properly prepare to study and organise their time efficiently (pg 19). It also allows students also working full-time the flexibility to achieve a work-life balance.
- Renovated building in the central park of Tartu with modern classrooms, studio and equipment is a good working environment for the students.
- Maintaining older, more traditional, history-laden rooms and buildings offers students a unique sense of space and belonging. A valuable resource in that there is a real feeling of inclusion and ownership of the study and break-out facilities which are used in extra-curricula activities and for independent study.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Whilst using masters students to ease staff workloads in the teaching of BA classes is a sound pedagogy, relying on postgraduate students rather than qualified, research-active, experienced tutors may impact on the student experience unless monitored closely.
- Increase teaching staff – workloads too high (74) Cannot continue to rely on experts from practice 'volunteering' to teach. One tutor in the Assessment Group visit session said the workload was "horrendous"
- In journalism "We have got more resources for research and less...for teaching" (104). Given that it is difficult to find and keep staff due to low wages, this should be raised with the University Managers
- Ensuring on-going modernisation of hard resources.
- The problematic refurbishment of the University Library and its subsequent closure is having a detrimental effect on the student experience.
- The finance model of the institution did not appear clear to members of staff. Communication by managers ought to be improved to remedy this. Also, staff felt that financial reform did not take into account the actual work they do on a daily basis. They felt the allocation of money between subject areas was not fair and were frustrated because whilst they wanted to spend more time developing a research-led, innovative and student centred approach to learning and teaching, lack of resources was hampering this.

## 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

- It is important to note that the University of Tartu teaches journalism at MA level, whereas the jobs market and the practice of other universities has been to value journalism education on a practical level only. The current socio-political context in Estonia means journalism is not a priority and as such does not appear in any Government policy document. This has an impact on funding allocation. Staff should be supported in their bid to get journalism on the national agenda and to achieve a national agreement on the role of professional journalism and the role of academia in preparing students for the workplace (105).

### Strengths

- Possibility to study journalism coming from different academic backgrounds; teachers are willing to help newcomers to acquire the same knowledge level as the BA journalism graduates.
- Flexible session-based learning gives the opportunity to work and study at the same time.
- Good blend of industry-focused skills development and academic teaching, with links to employment networks.
- Enabling MA students to pass on their knowledge to others at BA level through training and support is a good way of inspiring undergraduates. It also enables masters students to "bring innovations into the teaching process and lower the teachers' workloads." (21)
- Journalism students now have an option to complete a creative project rather than a thesis or exam and this has increased graduation rates.
- The modern curriculum is informed by knowledge of the news industry (94).
- Innovative Journalism teaching – drone studies is cutting edge.
- Course on data journalism in development. (95)
- Journalism internships and group training. Efficient and supportive monitoring of internships via one-to-one Skype conversations; group internships (however still MA students shared their mixed feelings about the group internship).
- Society-focused remit in terms of education and professional media communication
- Desire to be at the forefront of discussions about the role of professional journalism and to "develop study directions that harmonise with the changing needs of society and journalism" (105).
- The development of interactive television as a media education tool is innovative and, after initial set up, is cost efficient.

- This is a programme that calls for students to be critically evaluative as well as practical and academic, with elements such a 'self-reflection diary' to record and reflect upon the practicalities of a working day (154).

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Staff feel the curriculum is too local and international co-operation is weak – reducing modules studied in English may hamper this further.
- There have been a number of plagiarism instances for thesis, however steps put in place to eradicate this needs to be monitored.
- It is a challenge to find ways to make MA courses interesting for BA graduates and not to repeat the same subjects already studied at the BA level.
- Need to analyse the compliance of JOUR MA program learning outcomes to the main goal of the program (91) and to the industry's needs.
- How to promote the difference between BA and MA graduates to the employers, ask their specific needs and engage them in the teaching process.
- Students' ability to graduate in time differs dramatically between MA journalism and MA communication management students. Explore the reasons further and make necessary changes.
- MA students shared their mixed feelings about the group internship – why should it be on local radio, not on national broadcasting? "Master student has to see how things are on national level, in bigger media organisations". Also there was criticism towards the artificial nature of the group role play during the internship ("Yes, it was interesting to me to do things I usually don't do, but I would have had something more [useful].") This needs attention.

### **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 Institute's academic staff are competent, self-motivated and active in scientific research. The level of academic qualification of teachers has increased year after year. While a generation of young PhD has joined the team, several members are still in the process of obtaining their PhD.

Input from stakeholders is achieved by practitioners participating in master classes and seminars, but also in admission interviews. Teachers actively participate in international networks, professional unions, as well as in national and international research and science projects.

### Strengths

#### **MA JOURNALISM**

- Collaborative working across disciplines to ease heavy workload
- A growing base of young tutors in journalism: young and enthusiastic teachers who add a fresh perspective on teaching and research have been recruited. The professional journalistic background of several teachers is valued among students, as they pointed out the importance of lecturers being up-to-date with the industry's latest developments. Five doctoral theses in the field of journalism are being tutored by professors and lecturers of the chair, and as a number of PhD students also work as teachers of journalism, this is good news for the sustainability of the teaching.
- The Institute has made efforts to balance the ratio of scientists and practitioners, inviting practitioners to give presentations in the form of single lectures or seminars, and asking their mentoring during individual and group internships.
- Participation of teachers in research fields: the teaching staff is engaged in international co-operation research networks and research projects. The direct impact of this co-operation on the quality of teaching is pointed out by the programme co-ordinators.

#### **MA COMMUNICATION**

- The teaching staff of the Chair of Media and Communication meets the requirements set by the university's policy documents. The large share of lecturers with an academic degree, the participation of teachers in

international research projects and networks, the openness of the staff to acquire new skills and competences and their eagerness to offer support to young teachers' development are illustrative of a highly professional organisational culture.

- Nine staff members have a PhD, four are acquiring a degree in the recent future. Three young researchers with academic background of foreign universities have joined the teaching team. The Institute and the University are offering a development programme (i.e. monthly training including attending colleagues' lectures and seminars) for teachers, who are actively participating in it. Help and support from colleagues are easily available.
- Curriculum cohesion is achieved by constantly monitoring its content and the process of teaching and by discussing issues at meetings with the entire team involved. Feedback is gathered regularly from teachers, the industry and students (students are interviewed at least once a year). During a special course (Reflection on Work Experience) students are offered the possibility to reflect on the process of their study and point at the skills and development needed.
- According to alumni and SIS feedback, students are very satisfied with the teaching and the theory-practice ratio. During the interviews students shared their mixed feelings about the theory-practice balance, mostly depending on study and work background. Those working in the industry feel a greater need for theoretical knowledge. Others – especially coming from other study areas - value the practical approach of the programme and the study process. In all, involving practitioners in the study process and using case-studies in teaching is highly valued among students.
- Input from industry is achieved from students (as most of MA students work full-time on field of communication), regularly meeting programme councils and from practitioners, who are eager to contribute their time and effort to the teaching process. Several informal professional formats – like a communication club (connecting teachers, employers, alumni and students) – are also being used to monitor the developments in the industry and the needs of the labour market.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

##### **MA JOURNALISM**

- The actions planned by the chair – to develop a plan achieving a socio-political agreement on the role of professional journalism in Estonia (105) (journalism white paper) – are supported by the Commission. The involvement of media practitioners, industry policy makers and other higher education institutions (Tallinn University) in this process is very highly recommended.



- Taking into account that the options of MA students, who are working full-time while continuing their studies in an Open University format, to continue their studies abroad are limited, the Institute should make efforts to invite lecturers from foreign universities to teach in Tartu, making use of Erasmus Plus mobility schemes and sponsorships ('internationalisation at home').
- A lot of practical skills and reasonably detailed knowledge of media organisation operations are highlighted as learning outcomes of the curriculum, so more emphasis should be put on getting input from the industry, keeping teachers updated of the recent developments of the trade, organising individual and group internships with teachers and industry tutors working closely together with students.
- Lack of resources limits possibilities to bring international educators to teach in the Institute. Participation of foreign lecturers is being supported mostly by Erasmus programmes and help from sponsors (embassies, etc.).
- Non-attractive salaries, high workload and the low reputation of teaching make recruiting and motivating of young talents of research and practice a real challenge.

### **MA COMMUNICATION**

- As most MA students work full-time in the field of communication, this sets high expectations towards the quality and flexibility of the teaching and learning process.
- The high workload of some teachers and the need to make sacrifices in personal academic development are being communicated both in the self-evaluation report and during the interviews. The Chair has set a goal to reduce the workload by making structural changes.
- Practitioners and lecturers from other departments of Tartu University have been involved in the teaching process. Nevertheless, the engagement of foreign lecturers remains modest due to financial restrictions. As MA student options to study abroad are limited, more efforts should be made to invite lecturers from foreign universities to teach in Tartu, making use of Erasmus Plus mobility schemes and sponsorships ('internationalisation at home').

## **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

MA students in both journalism and communication studies are satisfied, ambitious and motivated. They choose to continue their education in order to be better prepared for the job market and to develop knowledge in a concrete area. The general picture is that they are honoured to be part of the master studies, however, only few of them are planning to continue their studies and enrol in PhD studies.

The overall comments for students from master studies on communication and journalism are the following: the international mobility numbers are very low; low student drop-out rates; students want more practical courses and more practitioners involved in the courses; the Study Information System (system for giving feedback) and the process of giving feedback individually is developed enough and gives concrete results; the Master studies diploma is valued on the job market; the Alumni networking is based on personal connections, recently a Communication Club for Alumni students has been set up; the University needs to work more on developing e-learning materials. Students and alumni recognise the need of the University to work on the financial sustainability issue. The students whom we met pointed out that there is practical training but it should be more qualitative. They pointed out that plagiarism should be more strictly punished and there should be a more strict selection process in place for the students who are enrolling in the MA studies. Nevertheless, the policy that the university has developed of MA students teaching BA students on a voluntary basis was found excellent and innovative.

### Strengths

- Good and improving student feedback (66)
- Students rate student counselling highly and the opportunity to study at weekends. (68)
- Exit interviews for those dropping out
- Communications students - good employability 71% in jobs related to area of study (78)
- In Journalism enrolment is down but graduation levels up. Motivated students and good selection process. Supporting students to create study plans and better manage workloads is also excellent (95).
- Journalism: high levels of employability in the industry between 75 and 90% (96)

- Journalism: good student support in form of a study manager whose job it is to work with 'lost-souls' (97)
- Satisfied and motivated students who know the value of an MA diploma.
- Low number of dropout students through the years.
- Possibilities for selection of different courses and giving the students opportunity to choose their own curriculum.
- Developed curriculum in order so that student from every field can continue their studies in both journalism and communication MA.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Students say that the workload is uneven (72). During the interview some of them expressed their discontent with the amount of group work and the amount of self-directed study. Given the cuts to funding, this is unlikely to change. Low international mobility of students in Communication and Journalism.
- Lack of funding is impacting on student satisfaction and higher workloads for staff.
- Even though there is an Office for mobility, the teaching staff should also work on promoting the mobility among the students and pointing out the importance of that;
- An e-learning system should be developed further in order to provide the students with distance learning possibilities.
- More qualitative practical work and developed system of recruiting more Alumni and practitioners in courses.
- The University management should work more closely with employers in order to give them more structural feedback about the programs and studies and to inform them what the programs are offering.

## **2. Assessment report of SPG at Tallinn University**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Tallinn University (hereafter also referred to as *the University* or *TU*) is the third largest public university in Estonia, focusing primarily on the fields of humanities and the social and natural sciences. TU is a result of the merger of several higher education institutions (HEI) (Tallinn Pedagogical University, Academy Nord, Estonian Institute of Humanities, Institute of History of Estonian Academy of Sciences, Academic Library of Estonia) of Tallinn into a single institution, which resulted in the founding of TU as a public university on 18 March 2005.

In 2015, structural and management reform resulted in the merger of 26 existing units into nine units: six schools (Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School; School of Digital Technologies; School of Educational Sciences; School of Governance, Law and Society; School of Humanities and School of Natural Sciences and Health), two regional colleges (in Rakvere and in Haapsalu) and the library.

TU has about 8,100 students (8.7% are international), and over 830 employees, including 409 researchers and lecturers (11.1% are international).

Study programmes on Journalism and Information are offered by two academic units of the university – the School of Digital Technologies (Information Science BA, Information Science MA and Digital Library Learning MA) and the Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School (BFM) (Journalism BA and Communication MA).

**TABLE 1. AGGREGATED DATA ON STUDY PROGRAMMES IN JOURNALISM AND INFORMATION.**

Study programme title	Information Science	Information Science	Digital Library Learning	Journalism	Communication
Language of instruction	Estonian	Estonian	English	Estonian	Estonian
Study level	BA	MA	MA	BA	MA
ECTS credits	180	120	120	180	120
Length of programme in semesters	6	4	4	6	4
Year of the launch of the programme	1965	1991	2007	2002	2002
Current version of the study programme	2016	2016	2015	2016	2016
Number of students 31.12.2016	56	58	12	80	114

**TABLE 2. NUMBER OF STUDENTS OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS (2014–2016).**

Curriculum	Candidates (all applications)			Admission			Dropout**			No of graduates		
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016

INITB	87	68	126	17	18	27	17	14	19	16	14	22
INITM	26	71	43	16	29	25	9	11	9	4	8	11
INDLM	12	10	6	8	8	5	2	2	1	11	15	10
KOAB	125	147	149	36	31	26	12	19	24	11	26	23
KOKOM	156	93	111	57	45	49	11	15	24	13	46	33
<b>Total</b>	406	388	435	134	131	132	51	61	77	55	109	99

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

The structural and management changes that were made at Tallinn University in 2015 were described to the panel as exceptional and the largest in the history of Estonian universities. These changes have brought about challenges for the staff, who the panel commends for having responded to the situation in a highly professional manner, by their ability to plan ahead, make good use of opportunities for cooperation, as well as creating innovating solutions and approaches to teaching and curriculum restructuring. From meetings with employers the panel learned that the development of the programs in general matches well with the needs and demands of the labour market and society. However, this period of change has also been very demanding for the staff. Despite their willingness to accept responsibility, it must to be taken into consideration that the high workload that this has caused for the academic staff may become a problem if it continues for much longer. The panel regards this to be a major issue which needs to be addressed in the near future. Therefore, it is recommended that more young qualified teaching staff should be recruited on permanent contracts, to guarantee the continuity of academic staff in future.

The students that the panel met at the visit are capable and motivated to learn. In general they were satisfied with the study programmes and teaching, as well as with the relations and interaction with the teaching staff, who can easily be accessed. A rather low rate of students conclude their studies in nominal time. The student dropout rate varies between study programmes but is rather high for some of the programmes. During the visit the panel was told that due to financial reasons many students work beside their study. This may, at least to some extent, explain the why students' progress slowly through the study, as well as the dropout rate. Although the latter has also been effected by changes that were made in the Study Regulations in 2012 when the rules of deleting students from matriculation register became much stricter. Teachers and study programme leaders strive to be flexible and support students at continuing their study. The panel recommends that the Tallinn University should monitor the situation closely and try to find flexible ways to improve it. The same explanation as described above, with student's financial situation, may explain why the international mobility of students is too low. The panel emphasises the need to find solutions that allow students to take more advantage of the existing mobility opportunities, as well as to introduce international mobility more and encourage students to use it. But the panel also commends the success of international interactions, which have resulted in attracting a high share of lecturers from abroad. This adds a

valuable strength to the study programs, by connecting it to the developments within the study fields internationally.

There are some differences in the quality of the programs or teaching groups that are discussed in detail within the chapters for each study programme, as well as the recommendations specified for each study programme.

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

### 2.3.1. Information Science (BA, MA)

#### **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 study programme is developed by the academic staff and in addition, a joint council for the BA and MA study programmes, the Curricula Council of Study Programmes of Information Sciences, participates in the development. The list of members of the council reported in the self-evaluation report includes representatives of the teaching staff, stakeholders (employers and alumni), and students at the BA-level, MA-level, and PhD-level.

From meetings with the teachers the team learned that the content and output of courses is discussed at teacher meetings to avoid overlaps or gaps in the content.

The self-evaluation report states that contacts are maintained with employers. At the meetings with both the staff and representatives of the employers it was confirmed that contacts and interaction between them has been good. From meetings with employers the team learned that they feel that the development of the programs matches well with the needs and demands of the labour market

and society. Furthermore, they were generally satisfied with the graduates and consider them to have sufficient competencies.

### Strengths

- The study programmes contain a good balance between research and practical orientation
- Good contact with employers
- The SPs are clearly focused and the structure of the SPs facilitates the process of logical acquisition of knowledge and skills, moving from introductory courses to specialist courses, from more general to specific, from simpler subjects to more complex courses.
- The SPs are research-based covering the latest trends and research and emphasis is on developing competencies by combining theory and practice.
- Integration with other institutes, interdisciplinarity, competency to provide over-university courses

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Finding additional funding to achieve excellence in research, teaching and staff development that will support the curriculum development.
- Motivating more graduates from the BA programme to continue studies on the information science MA programme.

## **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 resources at the university are good and up-to-date. Also students with physical disabilities have access to almost all lecture halls and facilities (Self-evaluation report, p. 28). Infrastructure for teaching and learning is adequate,

and digital learning environments are used, for example, Moodle. Access is provided to a wide range of databases which can be accessed also outside the campus. Moreover, IT support is provided for staff members. Information literacy training is provided for students by the library. Learning is supported by course material produced by teaching staff, for example, in Information Science the first text book in Estonian language is written by the staff members and will be published soon.

Contacts with labour markets and partner organisations are firm and thus also allow organising Internships smoothly especially at the BA level with libraries (p. 47).

### Strengths

- The university has set up a fund with a special budget to renew technology

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Due to the nature of the study programme it must be ensured that enough financial resources are allocated to keeping digital technology utilised in teaching and learning continuously up-to-date.

## **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 courses in the SAIS programmes are developed in a module system and have a similar structure. Moodle is used as a platform for teaching and course material. From the interviews with the teachers it appears that a good use is being made of digital tools in the teaching in order to foster students' digital skills and make the teaching process more effective. In the interviews with students



and alumni they agreed with this and in general they seemed to be satisfied with the use of digital tools and e-learning options.

The teaching seems to balance theoretical knowledge and practical skills well. The theory related aspects of the study programmes are interconnected to practice through the participation of part time teachers who work as practitioners in the field. In addition, practical training through internship appears to be well organised and serve to strengthen further the integration between theory and practical training. Interviews with students and alumni confirmed that they were satisfied with the arrangement of internship and consider it to be a good experience where they have the opportunity to connect theoretical studies with practice.

To support individual and social development of the students, a profile is being made of each students abilities at the beginning of the study on the basis of their prior learning and previous knowledge. This was regarded as a particularly positive feature by the team. The self-evaluation report shows that students are pleased with the teaching and this was confirmed in the interviews with representative of students and alumni at the meetings.

### Strengths

- Excellent cooperation with practitioners in the field
- Good arrangements for internship

## **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 academic staff of SAIS has a long working history in the field of information science with excellent outcomes. The staff is very enthusiastic and innovative and has been ready to advance the study area of SAIS, including the study programmes, continually. The team was impressed by their strong commitment to their work which has allowed them to develop programmes that in some ways have been ahead of time. In addition to the academic staff, practitioners from the field are hired as part time teachers. This supports the balance between theory and practice in the study programs.

The self-evaluation report states that there has been a long term teaching collaboration between SAIS and other units of the School of DT. In addition there is a collaboration with other schools of the TU. This was confirmed at the interviews with the Management staff and the Heads of the study programmes

The workload on the academic staff has been excessive. As previously mentioned, Tallinn University has gone through extensive structural changes since 2015. In addition to this, two academic staff members of SAIS have retired lately. The teachers are very active and competent and have managed to adapt and approach these changes in a positive way. Nevertheless, it is clear that this has been very demanding for the staff and despite their willingness it must be taken into consideration that such a high workload may become a problem if it continues for much longer. The team regards this to be a major issue which needs to be addressed in the near future. It is therefore important to recruit more academic staff, and it is recommended that it will be done soon.

According to the self-evaluation report the staff's workload is too heavy in relation to the number of academic staff members, who have organised big international conferences, published a textbook, written quite a high number of project proposals and research papers, and conducted teaching.

The financial constraints at the School of DT have not allowed new positions to be opened to attract younger staff. There is an urgent need to recruit young qualified staff in order to guarantee the continuity of academic staff in future.

### Strengths

- Well-qualified staff, enthusiastic, and committed to teaching
- Visiting international academic staff has been involved in the teaching in English

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Recruiting more academic 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 students are motivated to learn and the self-evaluation report shows that they are satisfied with the study programme and the teaching. In general students are also satisfied with the interaction with the teaching staff. At the interviews they reported that teachers can easily be accessed, they inform well on matters that students ask or discuss with them, and that the teachers respond well to feedback from students. This was confirmed by alumni.

The dropout rate is rather high. At the interviews with the staff it was reported that there are various reasons for this. Aside from reasons such as students failing to meet the requirements made in the study, or discovering that they had made an inappropriate choice of study, the pressure of students' financial situation is also a reason for dropping out. The staff tries to use case by case solutions to support them. This is mainly done by meeting students individually and offer them personal counselling. In some cases this has helped to bring students back. Although steps can be taken to support students who have problems related to the first two points, the last one is more difficult to deal with. It seems that many students work beside their study and that they find it difficult to combine this.

As mentioned before, the international mobility of students is too low and an effort is needed to be encouraged more.

### Strengths

- A profile based on prior learning and previous knowledge is created for each student at the beginning of the study
- The number of applicants for information science BA and MA SPs has remained high allowing for the selection of the best candidates. The admission competition is more than two candidates for each student place.
- Many students are motivated and active in their field of study.
- Alumni are competitive in the labour market.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- More effort is needed to minimise the drop-out rate
- The international mobility of students is too low and needs to be encouraged more

## 2.3.2. Digital Library Learning (MA)

### **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 DILL programme started in 2007 as an Erasmus Mundus programme targeting mainly students from the third countries, supported by the European Union. In the beginning it was a joint programme between TU, Oslo University College (today Oslo and Akershus University College/HiOA) and the University of Parma. However, HiOA left the consortium in 2015. Since then, the programme has been coordinated from TU but it will be taken over by the University of Parma this year (2017). The DILL programme distinguishes itself from other information science programs in Estonia by an exclusive focus on digital libraries and by offering all teaching in English. As the teaching is in English the DILL courses are also being used for other international students, e.g. Erasmus students. In addition it is among few collaborative LIS programmes in Europe.

The structure of the programme is according to the framework of the Erasmus Mundus Master programme. According to the self-evaluation report the content of the programme has developed over time. In the interviews with the teachers it was reported that to remain current and consistent with developments in society more focus is now on integrating topics such management, human resources within the digital environment, economy and by strengthening the focus on technology.

The same strategies and principles as for other SAIS programmes are followed for curricula development. The DILL programme is developed jointly by the academic staff at the collaborating universities. To ensure the coherence of the study programme and avoid overlaps, an updated matrix of relations between aims of courses and the programme is completed for each year. At the visit the team had a chance to examine the matrix which appears to be a very useful document and support the programme development and quality well. In addition, the DILL programme has an Employers Liaison Group which is involved in the curriculum design as advisors and in general, the study programme appears to interconnect theoretical knowledge and practical skills well. However, during recent years the recruitment of international students for the programme has been challenged after the funding structure of the programme changed as a consequence of finished funding from the European Union.

### Strengths

- Strong international orientation
- Provided timely/up-to-date competences in terms of labour market needs
- Built a world-wide community of graduates of the programme
- Provided firm competences for doctoral studies in foreign universities

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Decreasing number of applicants
- Finished funding requires identifying new funding sources and applying for funding
- Re-definition of the programme's profile may be necessary
- Finding new international partners may be necessary

## **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

At Tallinn University the premises are modern with good facilities for teaching in lecture, seminar and computer rooms. The resources at the university are good and up-to-date. The situation is the same at a partner university, the University of Parma (Self-assessment report, p. 63). A special library collection with from 150 to 200 titles is provided for the DILL students, and also a reference librarian is there to serve the DILL students. Access is provided to a wide range of databases which can be accessed also outside the campus.

Infrastructure for teaching and learning is adequate, and digital learning environments are used, Moodle in particular in all courses. Students are provided customised learning and reading opportunities with digital programme-specific objects to support their learning prior attending the courses (Self-evaluation report p. 64). Thus learning is supported by course material produced by teaching staff.

### Strengths

- The university has set up a fund with a special budget to renew technology
- Customised learning opportunities with digital learning objects provided for self-study in a digital learning environment

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Due to the international nature of the study programme it must be ensured that enough financial resources are allocated to digital technology to be utilised in teaching and learning and continuously up-dated.

## **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 DILL programme can be taken completely in distance learning but students are also on site. However, after the Erasmus Mundus funding stopped the number of applicants has dropped, it has become more difficult to offer the programme to students on site and more emphasis is now on distance learning. Moodle is used as a platform for teaching and course material. In addition to recordings of lectures by the staff, international professors participate in the teaching through video conferences and previous students who have finished PhD have also taken part in it. Because the program is based on e-learning and distance education an emphasis has been on fostering students' digital skills and the use of technique for an efficient learning process.

When the teachers were interviewed they admitted that it was a challenge to provide training for students that come in with a wide range of different background. However, when representatives of students and alumni were interviewed they felt that the teachers approached this in a very constructive way and that at each time students were encouraged and provided with the training and support that was needed for their study. Students and alumni are very pleased with the teaching.

At the beginning of the study a profile is being made of each students abilities on the basis of their prior learning and previous knowledge. The team regards this to be a particularly innovative and positive feature and a good example of how individual and social development of the students is being supported. In addition, this method has been taken up in other SAIS programmes.

At the interviews with the staff, students and alumni it was verified that different forms of teaching, lectures, practical training, independent and group work, are applied in the programme.

### Strengths

- Teaching provided in English along with foreign quest lecturers benefit other study programmes too.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Possibly increased flexibility with conducting studies could benefit students and their graduation time

### **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 DILL programme has excellent teachers who are qualified to achieve the objectives and learning outcomes. Personnel is shared with other SAIS programmes. What is also very important is that the collaboration between TU and the University of Parma (before also HiOA) ensures the involvement of a wider group of highly qualified academic staff. In addition, internationally well-known professors from abroad have participated in the teaching. Moreover, practitioners from the field teach in the programme as part time teachers, which supports the balance between theory and practice. The staff is very committed to their work and it is impressive to notice how enthusiastic and progressive they are. This has allowed them to develop a programme that has been innovative and very successful.

At the interviews with students and alumni it was reported that the staff is highly regarded by them. The students are satisfied with the interaction with the teaching staff. Despite distance teaching, teachers can easily be accessed and inform well on matters asked or discussed with them by students.

### Strengths

- Dedicated, experienced teaching staff who are regarded as opinion leaders in Estonia
- Experienced international visiting teaching staff
- Participation in wide international professional networks supports development of curriculum, conducting teaching and applying for research funding

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- workload to give teachers more time for research activities and self-development



- Recruitment of younger generation of the academic 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 students in the DILL programme are capable and very motivated to learn. Since the programme started a number of 137 students from 60 countries have completed it, with the average time for completion being 2 years. This can be considered to be a favourable outcome. The dropout rate has been minimal, or only 6 since 2007 according to the self-evaluation report. However, the Erasmus Mundus financial support of the DILL programme ended in 2011 and since then students have to pay for the study, as well as for living cost. After that there was a considerable decrease in the number of applicants and currently there are only 12 students enrolled in the programme.

At the interviews with students and alumni it was confirmed that they are in general very pleased with study and with interaction with teachers. Teachers can easily be accessed and that inform well on matters asked or discussed with them by students. The skills and competences gained in relation to the content of the programme and courses are highly appreciated by students and alumni. The programme can be regarded as being very successful.

According to the interviews with the teachers and alumni, the graduates have been very successful at finding work and the education has proved valuable in various sectors. This includes not only libraries but also new areas such as work at universities and digital management centres.

The programme has also been valuable at enhancing the confidence of the students and has motivated some of them to continue their studies. According to the self-evaluation report six graduates from the DILL programme graduates have defended their PhD in universities internationally and 26 students are pursuing their PhD at the moment. In addition it came out in the interviews with teachers, students and alumni that the programme has been successful at

creating a strong DILL community and that good contact remains between teachers and former students and between the graduates themselves.

### Strengths

- A community of graduates that is international has been created and it provides support for new students to get socialised in the field
- Good employment rate of graduates
- Former graduates qualified and motivated to doctoral studies

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- To increase the number of applicants.
- To find new funding opportunities for international (third country) students to study in the DILL programme.
- To find new partners to join the programme.

### Action Plans:

- Applying funding for third country students (e.g. Erasmus Mundus projects).
- Negotiating with partner universities to join the SP.

## 2.3.3. Journalism (BA)

### **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

Alongside the university's fundamental restructuring and merging process, numerous curriculum reforms have been performed with a lot of attention paid to interdisciplinarity, team-working and communication skills. The compulsory and transversal LIFE project in which student teams from a minimum three different institutes participate is an excellent example thereof.

### Strengths

- The interdisciplinary nature of the teaching staff ensures that the curriculum is relevant and up-to-date in terms of theoretical underpinning and vocational relevance. This, and its focus on the social sciences for theoretical grounding, gives Journalism its distinctiveness when compared to other courses in the locality.
- Changes in the curriculum are steered by the study programme director: changes can be performed fast, flexibility is key.
- The prospect to relate Journalism studies with the arts and audio-visual culture thanks to the collaboration with BFM will make the curriculum more desirable to both students and employers in the wider creative industries. BFM has very good connections with the industry, while being part of the industry at the same time. The collaboration of the Journalism BA with the BFM promises to be beneficial for acquiring experience in audio-visual journalism and cross-media story-telling.
- Willingness to embrace the international field of education and journalism by encouraging exchange opportunities for staff and students. Between 2010-2015 there has been an increase in terms of the percentage of international staffing and research thanks to several collaboration schemes with international partners (Erasmus + staff mobility) and within the EUPRERA framework.
- Strong track record of market and vocational relevance. Interaction between academic staff and media practitioners embedded within provision, which leads to good employability and up-to-date media-related focus.
- Cross-media and "hands-on" orientation of the study program helps to differentiate it from competitors
- Good range of support courses, and strategies designed to enable and retain students struggling with personal issues/workload/balancing timetables with other commitments.
- Working in teams is an important skill that is practised as part of the curriculum and one that is highly valued by the alumni.
- Flexibility to teach in English depending on the audience. No regulation to teach a parallel course in Estonian, which would double the teaching load of the staff involved.
- Ensuring that students exiting the courses are interviewed and data gathered in order to inform future recruitment and progression strategy.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The successful aligning of the Journalism programme to the arts and audio-visual technology characterizing BFM will require a clear strategy in terms of ensuring that staff do not duplicate content, and that modules

- link clearly to the core journalistic focus and competencies of the programme. It also calls for monitoring teaching practice, which (as we know) can vary between disciplines (page 17).
- Three priority areas of concern have been identified: 1) identity building after a period of merging and different academic and professional cultures coming together; 2) study time efficiency monitoring, and 3) coping with administrative burden and scarce resources. These areas call for sustained monitoring.
  - Poor student progression and completion rates. These went up considerably in 2016 – no doubt hampered by the necessity of meeting State requirements concerning students completing the required modules in a set time, and falling numbers, need to be addressed (see page 18). The module templates show that some of the assessments are linked to tasks students perform as part of their regular taught sessions. Whilst this is normally a way to ensure good attendance, perhaps in this case, with so many students working whilst studying, those unable to attend sessions due to other commitments simply choose to withdraw once they have missed several of these?
  - The Commission noted that poor completion rates are common across Estonia and that Journalism and Communication students blame pressure of work on poor performance. More investigation and sharing of best-practice would be beneficial.
  - Gaps in the curriculum, as identified by those working in the media communication field, relate to theory-related content (e.g. media psychology, media framing) as well as a variety of skills in the field of media entrepreneurship, project management, brand management, and scanning large amounts of texts. They also suggest courses offer tools for improving students' professional identity as journalists. Alumni also spot gaps in the curriculum with respect to: time and cost management, digital video production, several languages (e.g. Russian, Finnish, German). The Commission also noted some instability in the programme content, depending on the year of graduation. This calls for sustained monitoring. A feedback loop mechanism between the staff and the working field needs to be set up in a more sustained and formal way.
  - Installing a research culture is still a work in progress.
  - The programme should act more proactively in providing the possibility for an international mobility scheme for students. None of the students or alumni the commission got a chance to talk to could rely on a semester abroad in a partner institution: "All had missed the deadline". More proactive presentations of the partner institutes on behalf of the international relations office at faculty or programme level could be provided to the students in the future.

## 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

- Since 2002, the university has undergone a series of structural and institutional changes. Added to the merger of several educational institutions in 2002, and restructure in 2015. The merger of the Baltic Film Institute with the Media, Arts and Communication School has paid dividends in terms of resources for staff and students. The buildings and facilities at Tallinn are excellent. The audio-visual equipment and studio space are especially good. The upgraded facilities also had a positive effect on team morale and encouraged staff to collaborate on a wider level with those in other creative disciplines and to forge stronger, more diverse partnerships with external stakeholders.
- There has also been a change in the way in which Higher Education is funded. In looking at Journalism and Communications provision, it is clear that the intention of the restructure to provide scope for sharing best practice and deeper interdisciplinary education and collaboration between disciplines is being fulfilled. However, as with any major change, there needs to be a settling in period. That this is happening is evident in the assessment report which shows evidence of institutional reflexivity based upon student and staff feedback of the current situation and a careful evaluation of what is being offered in order to make the institution relevant for staff, students and the wider world. It is clear that changes to the funding of Higher Education, in which State funding is predicated on the needs of the external market place is continuing to impact on student numbers and staffing of social science-focused provision. There is an issue with staffing, readily admitted in the documentation, largely the result of Post Graduate qualification necessity for staff, many of who work in creative industries and do not need these to gain paid, professional employment.
- The disparity between lecturer salaries and those in non-Higher Education professionals is making recruitment and retention of staff a real issue. Concerns are also raised about work environment "working as practitioners in the free market was more pleasant and provided more opportunities than the university" (pp29-30). The strategy to recruit alumni and PhD students is a sound one, but may require future inducements.
- Attractive pay offered by communications industry employment is also impacting on student retention with some students preferring to go into the work-place rather than stay at university.

### Strengths

- A research-based, realistic awareness of what is necessary to gain and keep staff.
- Clear collaboration with professionals in Estonia and internationally in H.E. and communication industries in the creation and delivery of hard

(equipment) and soft resources necessary for programme creation, delivery and future student employability.

- Increased internship opportunities
- Increased access to excellent, up-to-date, industry standard studio and audio visual equipment.
- Despite high workloads, staff have responded stoically and creatively to the change-culture of recent years and it is clear many approach their work as a vocation.
- Flexibility and e-learning approaches to teaching are being enhanced in a bid to reduce teaching load and allow students flexibility in studying and balancing outside work.
- Excellent provision of access to teaching for disabled students.
- Great studio resources.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The falling off of students numbers due to the Estonian birth rate is a worry especially since student numbers are already low.
- There is a clear State funding approach to allocating resources: recruitment; number of graduating students; and how many credits students take each year. However, low graduation and low recruitment rates are impacting on finances detrimentally. That 60% of this allocation is for credits being studied may cause strategically-minded staff to put efforts into this rather than completion rates and recruitment. The Ministry of Education should look at the way that certain actions are prioritized in its funding model.
- Staffing is a real issue as are higher than average workloads for tutors, which is having an impact on supervision of research projects, teaching and student support(see above, plus pp29-33). Care also needs to be taken of ensuring sustainability of the current staff-base. The average age of staff members is high. As older tutors retire, there needs to be an effort to ensure younger members of the course teams are given sufficient support and development opportunities to fill the shoes of retiring academic staff.
- Most staff need to carry out work outside the university in order to meet their every day living costs. This low pay issue must be addressed at Ministry of Education and institutional level. The current reliance of practitioners to supplement and enhance the curriculum also needs to be closely monitored.
- Though we were told there is a budget for maintaining the current high level audio-visual facilities, this needs to be monitored to ensure standards do not slip in future.
- Though course staff were reticent about losing 'independence' by reliance on outside stakeholders for assistance with resources, they should bear in mind that partnerships with outside organisations may be a way of ensuring resources are kept up-to-date and in good repair.

- Although we appreciate that students do get many of their resources online and in the form of journals, some of the texts in the module templates were rather old – for e.g. Column and Editorial, Interviewing Techniques, Features and Reportage.

## 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 practical approach of Journalism BA programme and good promotion has attracted many young people study at Tallinn University and overcome the fear of academic learning. The programme is a good example how to engage practitioners to the academic world and make the learning process more interesting and attractive. The learning process is supported by excellent working environment, modern studios and technical equipment, though probably the possibilities are not fully used on BA level journalistic studies.

### Strengths

- Diverse learning strategies – flipped learning, e-study, live client projects.
- Incorporating foreign journalism and new media into the Journalism programme makes the course relevant and globally focussed.
- Digitisation of feedback.
- Requiring students to use the virtual learning environment to engage with learning and each other as part of the assessment strategy.
- Positive feedback from students. Students find study process flexible and size of study groups "good". According to students interviewed Institute's response to feedback considering study process and study program is quick: changes are quickly implemented.

- Studies are made interesting thanks to the many practical courses; the study plan is designed according to the employers' needs and is constantly updated.
- Use of industry experts in delivery of teaching and assessment tasks. Many practitioners are invited to teach different subjects; the link between studies and a future job is strongly created.
- The criteria of assessment are introduced in the beginning of the course, and the amount of credits is perceived as fair by the students. There is peer assessment in Communication and Society.
- The newest study books (or texts) in English are available by electronic means.
- Teaching and learning process is supported by excellent facilities (new building, well equipped studio, computer labs).
- Students are able to work and study.
- Students selection process includes writing application essay, admission interview and presenting professional portfolio (if available). Each student has been individually evaluated by the committee. According to the program coordinator there are 5 applicants per student place.
- According to interviews the theoretical material is well linked to practical tasks.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Staff shortages impacting on student study, achievement and staff morale/health. Currently relying on staff who see it as a 'mission' to work as a tutor. Some older, more didactic staff do not see the requirement to take advantage of in-house training (83-4).
- Welcome moves to work more closely with industry to gain suitable staff and bursary opportunities.
- "Scarcity of supervisors" with PG qualifications (81)
- Differences between allocation of work and credit points among staff.
- Introducing more targeted support for BA students preparing for thesis assignment.
- The curriculum is changing too many times during the study period; students lose track.
- E-learning possibilities are not developed sufficiently. If students cannot participate in the lectures, they are cut off from a modern learning process and can fill the gap only by reading a book.
- The lack of Estonian study books on journalism.



- Students are trained to be good workers for employers, but the study process skips the subjects which are needed for personal development, stress management, avoiding burnout, journalists' safety, time management, ethics, psychology, etc.
- Despite the practical approach, the employers do not particularly value the skills of the graduates.
- Many journalism students have developed during the studies the understanding that they will never work in journalism.
- Poor student International mobility.
- Study process and Institute's facilities are mainly well-adapted to the needs of disabled students. Shortage of textbooks for visually impaired students has been recently solved according to panel. But among students' panel there was visually impaired student, who had problem with accessibility to the studies (TV-course. How to place a camera and how to use colour). Due to "rigidity of the study process" both student and teacher struggled to find an alternative for visually impaired. Road to solution was described as "too long"

## 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 general the academic staff meets the requirements set by the university's regulations, is competent, self-motivated and eager to meet stakeholders' needs. Participation of practitioners in the teaching process ensures better input from

society and adjustment of the study programme according to changes in the industry. Recent structural changes in Tallinn University and the BFM (Institute) have caused a considerable amount of stress among the teaching staff, forcing them to greater flexibility and openness towards rapid changes during the teaching process, but also resulting into greater emotional stress and feelings of insecurity. The Institute is struggling to find qualified teachers with a PhD to hire on a permanent, full-time basis. A number of teachers are working part-time as they need an additional job to support their non-competitive teaching salary. Practitioners involved in the teaching process are struggling with academic and administrative demands of the university. Recently the Institute has taken steps to attract more staff with PhDs to start teaching full-time.

The involvement of practitioners has given study programs of the Institute a strong positive, "hands-on" image among students and stakeholders. However, considering the sustainability and the coherence of the study programmes, attracting practitioners and part-time teachers remains challenging. The Institute should find ways to motivate the best talents from the industries to develop their academic careers, improve teaching skills and encourage them to participate in research. Excellent infrastructure, the central location and the proximity to the future employers have provide the appropriate foundation for enhancing the cooperation between the Institute and the industry.

The staff of the Institute is optimistic: structural changes have opened up new opportunities to improve the quality and the interdisciplinarity of teaching. Charismatic programme coordinators and Institute's management have proven successful to generate an open, personal and positive atmosphere among the lecturers. Innovative teaching methods are used and welcomed by the students. Professors and lecturers are also well-known specialists in their field, often approached as experts and/or opinion leaders by media.

The University has been successful in inviting lecturers from abroad: 11% of the teaching staff comes from abroad (the highest number among Estonian universities, according to the vice rector). The readiness of teachers to educate both in Estonian and English and the historical background of the BFM as an international school gives study programs good prospects to contribute more actively to Erasmus Plus student exchange.

The previous hiring system of teaching staff based on five-year contracts has been replaced with permanent positions to comply with Estonian law. Still steps have to be taken to increase teachers' confidence and help them build and maintain their academic careers (i.e. thanks to a tenure system).

The high workload of teachers (according to the self-evaluation report and our interviews the workload is much higher than defined in university regulations) has a negative impact on staff international mobility, self-development and research. A better balance of teaching and research workload along with a system making visible the staff's workload is strongly advisable.

## Strengths

- Tallinn University's teachers of journalism have close connections with the industry, giving them a good overview of new developments in media and the skills and competences needed. The help of practitioners is resorted to so as to give the curriculum a more practical orientation and help students build their professional identity.
- To get a more balanced and detailed view of the industry's needs, the program coordinator has conducted in-depth interviews with key people of the industry (IT visionaries, practitioners, university teachers), to improve feedback and knowledge of skills and competences needed and to adjust the program according to the changes taking place in the industry.
- The staff of the Institute is optimistic: structural changes have opened up new opportunities to improve the quality and interdisciplinarity of teaching and have given more confidence in the future.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Full-time teachers in general meet the formal qualification requirements and have sufficient teaching experience and practical knowledge. They have the necessary academic competences and participate in research programmes. In 2016 more lecturers with PhD have joined the Institute, as increasing the academic level of the teachers was advised by the previous assessment committee. This partly alleviates the problem with the BA theses supervision, but the current number of qualified supervisors is still limited and the Institute struggles with very high workload and a large number of students per supervisor.
- Teachers consider both research and teaching valuable and relevant. However, combining teaching and research has been a challenge according to the teachers interviewed. BMF's background has historically been on teaching and learning, not on research.
- The overall workload of teaching staff is high and demanding. More full-time staff are needed. Teachers' workload and high qualification requirements do not respond to the salary. This, as well as academic and administrative workload, make attracting young talents and practitioners to teach at the university a real challenge. Increasing staffing levels, especially among younger practitioners, is recommended.
- Teaching significant parts of the programme by recurring to teachers with part-time contracts and to practitioners may give the study programme the flexibility needed during structural changes, but in the longer run it could endanger the sustainability and the academic coherence of the programme.
- Due to financial limitations it is possible to motivate practitioners to teach for a short period of time only. As they are mostly fully engaged in a job elsewhere and have very limited time, it is hard to encourage them to

- acquire the formal teaching qualifications, enhance their teaching skills, participate in research, etc.
- The University offers courses and possibilities for self-development for new teachers, but it is hard to oblige practitioners – working mostly from a sense of mission – to participate in such courses. Hence, a steady offer of specially tailored courses on university teaching for practitioners would be a good practice. We refer to the cooperation between regional journalism schools (DK, EST, FIN, LT, LV, SWE) on how to improve media teaching the conference “When media teaching meets media reality” in November 2016.
  - The Institute’s management constantly monitors feedback from students and adjusts the study programme according to that. All participants, teachers, students and programme coordinators, pointed to the need to improve the feedback system to get more personal and more detailed information about the study process. Students’ self-evaluation should also be included in this process.
  - The feedback has led to changes that were quickly implemented. Usually the feedback has been positive, but there has been a case of replacing a lecturer after negative feedback. Ensuring training for ‘conservative didactic choices by elderly academic staff’ (pg 95) is recommended.
  - As practical subjects are very language-based and mostly taught in Estonian, opening the curriculum to Erasmus students is a challenge. Still the eagerness and ability of lecturers to teach both in Estonian and English (as well as Russian) should be highlighted.

## 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

During the site visit our team has an opportunity to meet students who are highly satisfied with their studies in Tallinn University. The students are capable and highly motivated to study and develop their skills. They are identifying themselves as part of this University and are pointing out that the level of

practitioners on the courses is good. Still, most of them are not seeing themselves as working in journalism and are not wanting currently to continue their studies in Master studies.

The most encouraging things that we saw are: the relations that the students and the teaching team have; the resources; the opportunities and network that studying here provides the students. The relationship between the teaching staff and the students sometimes develops into a mentoring one and several alumni have become tutors at Tallinn. Both sides are highly satisfied with the opportunity to develop that kind of relations and network among themselves to enhance provision. In addition, they encourage students to get work out into the public sphere: *"The teachers encourage you to publish your work"* - say students. This gave us clear picture of our motivational relations that the students and teaching staff have. Most students work during studying, but the teaching staff has a high level of understanding and are very flexible. Students are satisfied with the resources that the University has. Also they are satisfied because after finishing their studies they can work on both, Estonian and English language since few of the courses are on English.

The feedback system is not as helpful as the dialogues that the students have regularly with the teaching staff in every phase of their courses. In the online system, students must give feedback on a number of modules in order to progress to the next stage of learning. If they want they can evaluate all the courses, but as we heard they did not have faith in this kind of feedback. However, we did not hear one concrete change made upon this feedback system.

According to the vice rector the University is developing a new feedback system supporting more possibilities for students' self-evaluation and two-way communication between student and lecturer. Also the better use of formal feedback gathered is being planned.

Students do not always know how the institute works and to whom they need to address, if needed, some issue. They know of the existence of the Student Union, but are not sure that is the right way of raising their voice when there are problems.

The number of the outgoing students on international programmes is lower than incoming students. The students, the teaching staff and the administration pointed out that the only reason for that is that most of the students are working and it is really hard for them to go abroad. Also they pointed out the financial issues of studying somewhere where the cost of living may be higher. The students who come from other Universities on exchange have many opportunities to integrate themselves in the study environment.

The Alumni is connected with the University on different levels; some of them are coming to give lectures and others are networking with current students and offering work experience. However, they think that the University should involve them more in university life in general.

Though practitioners are involved in delivering learning and teaching, they point out that the students need to be taught more general skills (such as working in team, budgeting for projects).

### Strengths

- Students readily find work in creative media industries. They find jobs mostly during studies and by building networks with the practitioners who taught in the courses. The same situation goes for finding an internship.
- High levels of satisfaction.
- The students give the impression that they identify themselves with the University and feel honoured to say they study at Tallinn University.
- Good relations between students and teaching staff based on sharing best practices and experiences. Accessibility of professors and lecturers and informal relations inside the BMF.
- High level of practise and a lot of practitioners involved in the courses. Most of the practitioners work in media and give students different perspectives in terms of their education. They also encourage students to publish their work, which is valued by the study body.
- Resources of the University are more than satisfying and the students have all they need for studying.
- Quick implementation of changes into curriculum according to feedback and industry's needs.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The actual situation is that the number of incoming international students is higher than outgoing students. The management and teaching staff are realizing this situation and they pointed out that they are working constantly on improving that. The University has officer for promoting the exchange programmes. However, the officer should work more closely with the students and the teaching staff should also work more on promoting the exchanges.
- Feedback system and evaluation is organized in such a way that students are obliged to evaluate through electronic system a certain number of courses in order to register the next semester. Still, the teaching staff is not getting a clear picture from that evaluation system and the students are not sure that their feedback leads to the necessary changes. The evaluation system needs to be developed further in order to be sure that concrete changes will be made as a result of the feedback.

- There should be a clearly communicated system for dealing with student issues so that the students' voice be heard. When they encounter a problem, they must know who in the institution to address it to.
- The awareness of and participation in student involvement activities (Student Council) should be more encouraged.
- Many students lack a sense of journalistic identity profession and do not feel connected to journalism.
- The employers underlined that the students need to be more educated in terms of general knowledge and general skills - such as working in teams, project management and other soft skills.
- There should be more involvement of the Alumni in the development and teaching of courses as part of an overall strategy of sharing experiences and best practices.

### 2.3.4. Communication (MA)

#### **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 past five years have been characterized by unprecedented change and challenge. Staff have responded to these with creativity, energy and commitment in order to come through it with some innovative approaches to teaching and resource sharing. The prospect of a new Masters in Contemporary Communication as a result of the merger with the BFM, to be launched in September 2017, is positive. However, more effort should be put into the communication about the new programme's components and learning outcomes, as current BA students the Commission talked to felt under-informed.

### Strengths

- The programme offers a good balance between communication theories, research methods, and field courses related to e.g. social communication and language-based communication, health communication.
- Meeting with the teaching staff of the MA in Communication taught the Commission that the self-evaluation report no longer fits the current reality of the programme. Among other changes, the social communication track, one of three tracks, is now labelled Work and Health Communication, which is run in collaboration with the language department. Emphasis is on human-to-human communication, doctor-patient relations, environmental communication, etc. The staff is enthusiastic about this cross-disciplinary approach.
- The goal of the MA in Communication is to deliver communication strategists. MA students in Communication feel positive about the programme's content and about the employers' valuing their MA degree and professionalism.
- The accessibility of internships is excellent thanks to the location and the proximity of (media) companies and ministries.
- Some courses are offered in English and Erasmus + staff mobility schemes are used to invite colleagues from abroad to teach a short module, allowing for internationalization at home as well as incoming international student mobility.
- Tutors invest a lot in the supervision of MA theses. Weekly MA thesis writing seminars and academic writing classes are beneficial for the motivation of the students and the quality of their thesis, which is also illustrated by the low dropout figures.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- More effort should be put into connecting students to excellent university programmes abroad and by establishing joint or double MA degrees whereby the current contacts of staff members would be turned into structural collaborative networks.
- Student feedback points in the direction of too high a workload in relation to credits that can be earned. This calls for closer monitoring to ensure students are not unduly taxed in areas where credits are lower.
- Less resources have resulted in less contact hours. This calls for close monitoring.
- Students and alumni have communicated the need to add particular skills and knowledge into the curriculum: budgeting, project management, media impacts and effects (which was made redundant during structural reform).
- Employers and alumni have recommended the setting up of a School of Employers, School of Public to pass the word about skills and competences acquired during the study program "so the employers will know the skills of their future (and present) employees".
- More effort is needed to raise the profile of MA Communication courses in the workplace and with the State. One student said "An MA doesn't get you any better pay or extra career prospects."



- The Communication MA especially has a unique selling point blending as it does Public Relations, Marketing and Journalism. There is considerable synergy between each of these areas in the workplace and the course ought to be marketed more aggressively as something which speaks to the way in which media communicators often work across several fields in the 21<sup>st</sup> century news media environment.

## 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

- Changes in funding is impacting on hard and soft resources, but good to see the programme team using creative strategies with regard to curriculum development and student support to make up for the shortfall in terms of available finances.
- Falling demographics and low student completion rates are impacting on funding levels.
- There is a clear State funding approach to allocating resources: recruitment; number of graduating students; and how many credits students take each year. However, low graduation and low recruitment rates are impacting on finances detrimentally. That 60% of this allocation is for credits being studied may cause strategically-minded staff to put efforts into this rather than completion rates and recruitment. The Ministry of Education should look at the way that certain actions are prioritized in its funding model.

### Strengths

- Proactive use of digital technology and social media to aid learning and use teaching resources more efficiently. The introduction of distance learning modules, the promoting of social media interaction and use for assessment, and greater use of Moodle are just some of the digital approaches used.
- Responsive, reflective approach to course development. More resources have been put into preparing students for Theses are paying dividends with improved achievement of students.

- Excellent facilities for media work involving collaborative support across the group. Many open study areas actively used by students for break-out, learning, bonding, relaxing and independent study needs.
- Excellent access in the building for disabled students.
- The improvements to the work and study environment for staff and students gives Tallinn University an energy and identity of its own and is valued by staff and students, and especially in terms of morale following years of structural and institutional upheaval.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Restructuring and the growing number of students is impacting on hard and soft resources (92-94). This needs to be closely monitored and pressure put onto the Ministry of Education to look again at its funding model.
- Staff shortages are a pressing issue, as is low pay. Presently, all staff need to work outside the university in order to meet their everyday living costs. This low pay issue must be addressed at Ministry of Education and institutional level. The current reliance of practitioners to supplement and enhance the curriculum also needs to be closely monitored.
- Reliance on practitioner teaching volunteers is common and needs to be monitored. Creating a strong continuing development teaching programme for practitioners wishing to enter Higher Education, and offering 50/50 (teaching/professional practice) contracts may be a way of ensuring stability and sustainability of your teaching base as well as retaining practitioners with current market knowledge.
- Increasing the number of teaching materials in the Estonia language would be beneficial.

### **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

As most of the MA students are combining their work and studies, the programme has been developed and is taught in a way that students can flexibly participate. The possibilities of e-learning are though still underestimated and can add the flexibility even more. Compared to the journalism profession MA in communication area seems to be more appreciated and many students are encouraged by their employers to study and graduate. The University has the background of pedagogical school and has therefore also excellent possibilities to supports teachers with good teaching skills and modern methods.

### Strengths

- Strategy to encourage students to become future higher education professionals may solve the teaching shortage.
- Diverse, market-relevant study that embraces theory and practise and makes use of client-projects to bring an element of real-world practice into study.
- Clear preparation trajectory for the MA thesis is shown. Master thesis preparation process is considered "very supportive" by the students interviewed.
- The programme itself and many courses in it are carried by enthusiastic and charismatic teachers.
- Studying is made very flexible for working students, but suitably strict with respect to process and student engagement especially in terms of the completion of independent study.
- Students highly value practical approach, flexibility of studies and interdisciplinarity of the program. Work in smaller groups and using innovative teaching methods (drama, acting classes, yoga) also as easy access to professors and lecturers is highly appreciated.
- Students consider 2 year study period optimal.
- New MA in Contemporary Media starting in September is a very modern programme taught in Estonian, promoting multi-cultural communication, online news gathering and dissemination, and exploiting social media and other emergent media platforms.
- Partnership with employers to provide internships for Erasmus students with media practitioners. International Club is very active. Buddy system for Erasmus students, some of who go on to be ambassadors for the university.

- Students encouraged to apply theory to practice at several points throughout the curriculum.
- Clear communication pathway between students and staff. It is a small community in which staff are accessible and communication is often frequent and informal.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- BA graduates are not interested in continuing their studies directly in Communication MA.
- E-learning is not practiced consistently, video or audio lectures are not available, though most of students work and would benefit from distant learning possibilities.
- Student's international mobility should be made easy and flexible, it should be introduced right in the beginning of short 2 year MA studies. Also, the benefits of learning abroad should be more fully explained.
- Tallinn University needs to work harder on the branding of its communication courses across industry.
- Tallinn University should continue to make an effort to discuss expected student competencies with professional bodies and employers.
- The Commissioners were told that accessibility to parts of the programme could be improved – in TV for e.g. there needs to be consideration given to alternative assessment forms for visually impaired students.
- Staff believe there are "huge possibilities" to develop in terms of audio-visual content of programmes and a strategy for this should be considered seriously.

### **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

See staff shortages section in Journalism BA comments.

### Strengths

- Members of the teaching staff of Communication MA study programme are qualified, motivated and recognized both in academic and professional spheres. Practitioners are involved in the teaching process as guest lecturers. Modern and innovative teaching methods are being used. As professors work actively both on research and as practitioners, they are well informed about the newest trends in the industry and about skills and competences needed to work in it. Teachers are active in research and are often resorted to as experts and opinion leaders in Estonia.
- The ratio between experienced and less experienced staff members is balanced; training programmes have been used to educate new generations of teachers, estimating the teaching abilities of MA students and giving them the opportunity to participate in the education process.
- Teachers in the study programme are eager to use innovative teaching methods. More experienced teachers help younger colleagues to build professional networks and to enter the international professional community. The teaching team has set high standards for the teaching process and has encouraged less experienced lecturers to participate in Learning and Teaching education courses offered by the university. The satisfaction level of students has increased since, according to qualitative and quantitative feedback gathered by the teachers and the management.
- Students appreciate the openness of the Institute to foreign guest lecturers (internationalization at home). The Institute's long-time partners' lectures have been highly valued among students.
- Students value work in smaller groups and the use of innovative teaching methods. Easy access to professors and lecturers is highly appreciated.
- The MA thesis supervision process is considered 'very supportive' by the students interviewed. There is a teacher students can go to for their questions on methodology, and every teacher supervises around 8-10 students.
- In addition to formal feedback via SIS, more personal feedback instruments are used in the process of teaching, giving the teachers more possibilities to analyse the course, the teaching process and the student development. Besides personal and group discussion, teachers use social media and other means for feedback (Facebook, course blog, student's personal blogs, where student can write a self-evaluation).
- Excellent infrastructure, central location and proximity to the future employers provide a secure foundation to enhance the co-operation between the Institute and the industry.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Structural reforms and constant changes in study programmes have provoked stress among the teachers and increased their level of insecurity. Programme coordinators are making efforts to alleviate the stress.
- As there is a lack of good specialists on the labour market and as the university's financial resources are limited, it is challenging to hire practitioners to teach full-time at the university. The biggest motivator – as communicated to us during the interview – is still the sense of mission and personal interest in the subject. Student feedback signals that specialised lectures delivered by practitioners were considered useful and of very high quality. Nevertheless, increasing the academic level of the practitioners involved in the study process could be an opportunity for development.
- Strictly speaking only three courses are offered in English, which makes the programme considerably less attractive for foreign students. Some lecturers said during the interview to be able and willing to teach both in Estonian and in English. Apparently the working language of the course is chosen depending on the audience group. The BMF also offers an MA programme in Communication Management in English. Given BFM's international character, it could give study programmes better prospects to contribute more to Erasmus international student exchange.
- Due to limited resources, high workload and the combination of different responsibilities in and outside the university, it is challenging for teaching staff to focus on professional development. There have been some issues with older teaching staff and tendency to be too didactic (97). Teachers are participating in courses offered by University, but the access to conferences and other self-development tools have been somewhat limited.
- As finding qualified new teaching staff from the extremely competitive labour market is challenging; the Institute should develop a plan to help students build their academic career (e.g. more supervision to continue their studies, encourage them to go on with their PhD, help with contacts for further studies, develop teaching skills).
- Peer observation is carried out though this is not an officially structured process. It would be wise to invest in this type of feedback in order to facilitate reflexive learning and to identify professional development needs especially with regard to part time practitioner tutors.

## 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 students of Master studies are highly satisfied with their studies. It is clear that they are motivated students who choose to continue their studies in Tallinn University since it provides them with practitioner led learning in addition to theory. They underlined the close relation with the teaching staff and programme management. "Everybody is accessible", said MA students, referring to the teaching staff, administration and managers of the programme. Many of the teaching staff are practitioners. This helps a lot in the networking process and future career opportunities for students. Also there are a few members of the teaching staff who are incoming teachers from other Universities. This helps give the students a different perspective.

There are courses for academic research and writing during the preparation of the MA thesis. Students seem to be satisfied with the supervision in the process of preparing for writing the MA thesis.

The selection process (interview, application form, project for thesis) is well organized and helps the students enrolling in the programme to get a clear picture of it.

The feedback system is well organized, but students felt they were not often aware of any concrete results made because of it. The managers of the programme need to find a way to ensure the students know that their comments are taken into account and that they are making changes based on these comments.

Alumni are connected with the University in many different ways, but there is not a clear picture in terms of a policy for following students after finishing their studies, or of finding a way to enlisting them into the teaching team.

As there is underlined in the report, more than 90% of the students are working whilst studying. This leads low numbers of students going abroad to learn. Mobility of students is priority to the teaching staff, but not to the students. Many said they were aware of the Erasmus exchange but did not apply because they missed the deadline.

The official language of the programme is Estonian. Only three courses are delivered in English, which leads to difficulties when Erasmus students want to attend here. Still, during the site visit the teaching staff ensured the Commission

that they are currently helping several Erasmus students to enrol in the MA programme.

Students value input from external employers.

### Strengths

- professionally motivated and capable students.
- The students have good relations with the teaching staff and are developing networks and relations often being mentored by staff or developing mentorship practices among themselves. The teaching staff and the management of the programme are constantly supporting research and the synergy between the different aspects of media communication and applying theory to practice.
- There are a lot of practitioners as teachers which ensures good internship opportunities and market-facing relevancy.
- Even though there were changes in the curriculum in 2015, students are satisfied with the process of changes.
- The programme is based on good organization of interdisciplinary courses, and is unique in Estonia. It is really notable that the students are aware of this and consider this as positive.
- Good practise is organizing courses for academic writing and research methods for students while studying MA and preparing the MA thesis.
- Students of Tallinn University are great ambassadors of their learning experience.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Internationalization needs to be developed in order for students to use the opportunities to study abroad. The teaching staff, as well as the administration and the management of the programme, need to develop a strategy for promoting mobility opportunities. They should find an appropriate approach to motivate students to use those opportunities.
- The management of the programme should follow Alumni after they finish their studies. They should be more involved in the teaching and development of courses on BA or MA level and be motivated in the path of continuing their studies.
- Feedback of students on the SP is regularly analysed by the teaching staff and the SPA. Data is collected through a variety of methods including questionnaires, evaluation in action and interviews.- page 88. The management of the programme needs to find a way to ensure students that their comments are taken into account and that they are making changes based on their comments.



- Increasing the number of the modules taught in English, since internationalization is an important goal of the programme.