

Assessment Report

Study Programme Group on Humanities

Tallinn University

University of Tartu



June 2015

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Introduction

The aim of the assessment panel was the evaluation of the Humanities study programme group in 2 institutions: University of Tartu Tallinn University.

The following persons formed the assessment panel:

Prof Malcolm Cook	University of Exeter; UK
Prof Kristian Bankov	New Bulgarian University; Bulgaria
Prof Hugh Beach	Uppsala University; Sweden
Mr Tapio Heiskari (student)	National Union of University Students; Finland
Ass. Prof Marjan Hester Groot	Leiden University; The Netherlands
Prof Benedikt Stuchtey	Phillips-Universität Marburg; Germany
Dr Simon Kirchin	University of Kent; UK
Prof Katalin Farkas	Central European University, Budapest; Hungary

After the preparation phase, the work of the assessment panel in Estonia started on Monday 4th May 2015 with an introduction to the Higher Education System as well as the assessment procedure by EKKA, the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education. The members of the panel agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group at the two universities, which were part of the assessment process. The distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment panel was then organised and the schedule of the site visits was discussed.

During the following two days (Tuesday and Wednesday) meetings were held at the University of Tartu, followed by the site visit to Tallinn University on Thursday and Friday. 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 panel members to exchange information, discuss conclusions and implications for the particular programmes under review. At both universities while the initial meeting with the vice-rector was attended by the full panel, for meetings at the programme level the panel divided into two groups of four, where specialists could work closely with their university counterparts. The teams met deans, heads of programme, teaching staff and students in the course of their visits and in this order. The panel met very few external stakeholders or alumni at either of the two institutions.

On Saturday 9 May the panel held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report was agreed and findings of panel meetings were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report. This work was executed in a cooperative way and the members of the panel discussed their individual views on the relevant topics.

Tasks of the Assessment panel

The overall task of the assessment panel was the evaluation of the study programmes in humanities, first at the University of Tartu and then at Tallinn University. Before the site visits, all members of the panel exchanged their first impressions about the written material provided and sent feedback in a format provided by EKKA in order for the preparation phase to be informed by some initial areas identified as strengths and possible areas of improvement. The most important documents used for the preparation of the evaluation were the self-evaluation reports from both universities. In both cases the panel received full details of the programmes being evaluated and these reports formed the basis of the early work of the panel. The panel did not see any samples of assessed work.

The assessment of the individual study programmes as well as writing the report after the visits obviously represented the major and most significant part of the work. In addition to a detailed look at each curriculum, the assessment panel discussed and identified possible areas for curriculum adaptation and development in the light of identified changing needs and expectations of Estonian society as well as within the broader international community. The panel sought to understand the role of humanities in Estonian society and sought also to assess to what extent the universities were conscious of producing graduates in humanities who had the necessary generic skills to make useful contributions to the society in which they lived.

Study Programmes Findings Summary

Whilst the Bachelors and Masters programmes in both universities have evident strengths and can be seen to serve the needs of students and of Estonia well, the panel recognised that falling numbers in some areas and perhaps a lack of awareness of the great contribution that humanities staff and students make to society, posed particular challenges to universities working within limited budgets, with precarious staffing structures, demographic change and international competition. They may need to more actively promote the role and significance of humanities study at university level. They may need to explain more clearly the kinds of generic skills that students acquire in the course of their studies: the ability to think creatively and critically, to write and express themselves articulately, to work in teams, as well having specific skills in the subjects they have studied. In both universities the panel found staff and students who were proficient in English and who could express themselves with clarity. In some cases the levels of English were astonishingly good. Many staff also spoke German and Russian and some students could understand Russian as well. The panel recognised that an important reform of the status of university teachers was underway, with a revised expectation of tenure, but the panel did not get a clear sense of whether such action was fully welcomed or even understood by many of the staff it encountered. The staff in both institutions seemed to be working on precarious contracts, with salaries often paid by research grants of limited duration. The panel felt that on occasion, joint research projects in which there was expertise in both universities, might have more general international impact, leading to major publications and to significant international conferences. In neither university did the panel see any evidence of the consideration of moderation of assessment in order to secure standards and to ensure parity. Staff teach modules, assess them

and give the marks - students' work is not anonymous and the panel felt that that was something that the universities might want to consider in the future.

In both universities the panel found enthusiastic students and staff who were committed to their disciplines and who were conscious of the need to publish. Both universities seemed to suffer from significant student dropout rates and yet there seemed to be little analysis of the reasons for such wastage, other than the awareness that many students were working their way through their studies and were working to secure a living. There appeared to be low numbers of students studying abroad under Erasmus or other schemes. This again was explained by financial constraints and the need to work, and while the panel understood and was sympathetic to such difficulties, it did feel that humanities students in particular would benefit greatly from access to a foreign culture. In both universities the panel found significant numbers of faculty members coming from abroad (about 10%) and this was welcomed. Even so, staff expressed the wish that more finance were available in order to allow prestigious staff from abroad to be invited for short periods within their institutions.

The panel found in both universities clear evidence of cordial staff-student relationships and the accessibility of staff was commented upon and welcomed. The panel was generally impressed by the efficiency and care of senior managers and of support staff. In both universities staff and students expressed satisfaction with the level of resources required for teaching and research, with the library provision being specifically good and access to online databases being seen as excellent - clearly such access is vital for humanities staff and students. In both universities the panel found buildings which, while clearly very different, were well maintained and provided pleasant working environments for study. In short, the panel found many positive factors in the teaching of humanities in both universities. It also concluded that humanities were sometimes fragile units that would never attract large numbers of students, and that this put particular pressure on university managers. However, it expressed the strong belief that even when small, such units could be immensely valuable and to lose them would be damaging to the status of the universities and the country. The panel further expressed concern about the publication policies in the universities. In humanities, unlike other disciplines perhaps, the reputation of scholars and of units will depend on major articles or monographs in international journals or with major publishing houses. The long lists of publications seen by the panel did not inspire confidence, rather the contrary. What counts in humanities is impact and quality not quantity.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

To conclude, the major issues identified by the panel were the frailty of staff contracts, the worrying demographic trend and the consequent drop in student numbers, exacerbated by significant drop out rates, the relative lack of awareness of the importance of generic skills and the inability to communicate both within the universities and without, about the importance of the humanities in a modern society, and the many roles for which it educates its students. The panel learned that in neither university anonymous marking was not the norm. Assessed work is generally not being moderated with a possible consequent risk to standards and equivalence.

1. Assessment Report of Tallinn University

Some characteristics of Tallinn University

Tallinn University is a young university, formed as a result of reorganisation some 10 years ago of the merger between the pedagogical university and other institutes. The University is in many ways still finding its way and when the assessment team visited the university in May 2015 it was presented with a new development plan and it became clear during the meetings that staff and students were concerned about what impending changes might mean for them. In fact many of the groups commented on what they saw as poor communication and the poor dissemination of information within the university. The university, naturally perhaps, is attempting to bring together many small units into larger groupings in an attempt to rationalise management structures. The Dean realised the importance of this in terms of flexibility between programmes and he also felt that this restructuring could raise the profile of Humanities in the institution. On the whole, academics resist change unless it is clearly explained to them and they can be persuaded to support it. It is also true that many humanities subjects will never attract large numbers and could be seen as running at loss - but this in itself was not a reason to discontinue them. The university, like all other institutions in the country, is having to face stark challenges: demographic change and the drop in the numbers of students of the normal university age; financial constraints as other demands are made on the state budget. Of particular note in this university is the BA in Humanities where the target audience is Russian speakers seeking to find their place in Estonian society. The role here is clearly of benefit to society as a whole.

The new development plan (*Promoting Intelligent Lifestyle, Development Plan 2015-2020*) seeks to develop five areas:

- 1 Educational innovation
- 2 Digital and Media Culture
- 3 Cultural Competences
- 4 Healthy and Sustainable Lifestyle
- 5 Society and Open Governance

It is clear that the role of humanities is of major significance in this new plan and can have an interest in any of the five strands. Staff and some students were apprehensive about what such a plan might mean for them: larger units and more remote leadership, but the panel did not see any particular reason to believe that humanities would be threatened by such restructuring and it may indeed allow small areas to survive. Indeed, it could lead to even more interdisciplinary work, more imaginative course construction and possibly also revised assessment methods as disciplines learn from each other and processes are enhanced. The panel was nevertheless a little surprised

to learn that new courses and structures were being planned without any attempt at market research and with apparent unawareness of any likely demand or the existence of obvious competition from other institutions. The panel was also surprised to learn that in at least two cases students found that their programmes were interrupted mid-way through the year because of resource issues. Clearly any students starting a particular programme have to have a guarantee that the University will support the programme through to completion. Students and staff commented favourably on what they saw as the ability of the university to act flexibly and nimbly, to respond quickly to any needs of society. It is important to recognise that humanities have a part to play in the developing needs of society and that humanities students are necessarily adapting to the needs of this society, gaining generic skills and IT literacy that would have been unthinkable some years ago. Whilst there is ample evidence of teaching quality in the university the panel felt that the introduction of some kind of peer review, steps that would lead to dissemination of good practice, would be beneficial.

The panel felt that there might be more moderation of marking, to ensure the security of standards in the university and to reassure the outside world of the status of a degree from this institution. It was a little surprised to learn that there seems to be no policy on late submission of assessments, and that much depends on the generosity of the individual teacher. This is clearly unfair to those who always submit on time and not helpful to students who need to learn the importance of time management. The panel also took the view that the University should have a clear and agreed policy on the nature of plagiarism and the penalties for it. At the moment much seems to depend on the individual teacher, and this is clearly unfair.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

On the whole, the panel found an institution with obvious commitment to the quality and reputation of humanities and open to new pathways as the needs of society changed. The areas were well resourced, staff and students were generally enthusiastic, the support staff were clearly highly appreciated, and the environment was conducive to a successful learning experience. The position of productive and competent staff was a concern to the panel which did not see clearly how staff could be expected to perform to their very best when confronted by constant anxiety about the future of their careers, who were producing articles somewhat frantically in order to get large numbers of outputs but not always appearing in the most appropriate places for their disciplines. The panel heard on a number of occasions that staff and students were not always aware of the rationale for changes taking place around them, clearly suggesting that there is a lack of effective communication in the institution, in particular between senior management and teachers.

1.1. Study programmes findings BA Philosophy, MA Philosophy

Study programmes and study programmes development

Philosophy is one of four subject areas based in an Institute. This Institute is on the cusp of the restructuring mentioned above. The focus of both the BA and MA in Philosophy is on continental philosophy, with some analytic philosophy. The panel picked up no tensions between these approaches as experienced by teaching staff or students. There is also an emphasis on interdisciplinary teaching and research with a number of other areas, such as Theory of Culture and Anthropology. There is an emphasis within the philosophy area on culture as a key concept that helps to orientate much of the curriculum and the approach to teaching. Both degrees aim to produce graduates with a grounding in philosophy and to produce graduates who can think critically, can articulate ideas well, and who are prepared for a variety of careers such as journalism, publishing, translation and consultancy.

Strengths and Areas of Improvement

- The subject areas studied are as one would expect in a philosophy degree, particularly one that angles itself towards the continental tradition. There is an introductory course in how to write and study philosophy, which the panel welcomed. The interdisciplinary nature of the BA programme in particular is thought to be a strength by staff and students alike.
- MA numbers have remained strong, with 17 in total at present, 6 admitted this year. BA numbers have shown some decline in recent years, explained in part by national trends regarding both funding for students and demographics. Some actions have been taken to address this decline, such as open days for applicants, and some interviews by students with other students, supported by teaching staff, to investigate why people come to study philosophy at Tallinn.
- The panel found a close-knit, lively community in which students are supported. There is a good student body which acts as a forum for student views. At the time of the panel visit there was uncertainty amongst some staff as to what the future restructuring will bring. The Institute has just hired a research officer who will be able to help staff prepare research applications of various types. This is to be welcomed. There were no major issues around staff teaching and administrative workload.
- The panel found that whilst there some appetite to make use of alumni, nothing had happened yet, in part because the current focus is on other matters.

Recommendations

- In order to address applications and early drop-out rates, we suggest that more could be done to support teaching staff and students in going to high schools to explain to teachers and their students what philosophy is and excite them about the BA programme.

- We also recommend that alumni pages are created, that an alumni network or similar is created and that over time alumni and activities with them (e.g. employability workshops) are integrated more into the life of the programme and Institute.

Resources

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The physical infrastructure in which the Philosophy Department teaches and operates is good. Teaching spaces are well-equipped, roomy and light. The Library is well-stocked and a pleasant working environment, and all participants that the Panel met reported no major problems with access to books and journals. We also thought that the standard of spoken English of the people we met was high.

Teaching and Learning

Strengths and Areas for improvement

- We found that there is a variety of teaching methods, even if lecture and seminars are the backbone of teaching. We also found a variety of assessment methods, although most courses rely on some combination of short or long essays, exams, presentations (single or group) and general seminar participation.
- We found that teaching staff have a great deal of autonomy in how they design, teach and assess their courses. We found that whilst staff talk a great deal about what they teach at staff meetings, there is little observation of others' teaching, and no sharing of, for example, exam questions. Staff do interact more, however, in research seminars.
- We found that teaching staff are very accessible to students, both in person and over email, and that there is a healthy relationship overall between teaching staff and the student body. There is also a (healthy) debate occurring within the teaching staff as to the balance in their curriculum between producing graduates who are adept philosophers and producing graduates who are ready for the world of work.
- In our discussion with students (below) we found that whilst they can talk about jobs they are interested in, and can talk well about work experience they have had, they were not so good at articulating the skills that they had learned in studying philosophy.

Recommendations

- We suggest that teaching staff consider observing each others' teaching in order to learn from each other. Such a system can be supportive and helpful for all concerned.
- We also suggest that there be some sharing of assignment tasks and question, and feedback on assignments, again so that staff can learn from each other as to how they are

assessing students and what the quality and quantity of feedback that is given.

- We suggest thinking about how transferable skills are exemplified through the curriculum and making it more explicit to students how they are gaining valuable experience for the world of work. This may help resolve some of the tension noted above about students becoming adept philosophers and being prepared for the world of work. These two matters need not be in competition.

Teaching Staff

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- We found that although there was a small number of staff, they covered a good deal of a standard philosophy curriculum and that they were able to support the student body. There was a concern raised that with so few staff, some areas of the subject could not be pursued as deeply as is ideal.
- We noted in the general comments above the nature of the contracts of teaching staff.

Students

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The Panel met students who were articulate, motivated and happy within the department. There seemed to be good interaction between the BA and MA students within the department. We have commented on the dropout rate above. We commented on transferable skills above.
- We found that the employment rate for Tallinn philosophy students is good.
- Students felt that their evaluations of courses had an effect, with one example being provided.
- We found that whilst the number of students going abroad for part of their studies is on the low side, students offered good accounts of their and friends' experiences. One obstacle they did note was the paperwork involved. The office that assists students going abroad was praised.
- We found that combining a (sometimes) heavy working life with studying is common amongst some students, reflecting national trends.

Recommendations

- We suggest that current students who have been abroad are used more in some capacity to help motivate other students to consider this option.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

We found a department that clearly cared about the subject, a department that behaved well towards its students, and a department that is currently in the process of change. The care that teachers give their students is to be praised and encouraged. Our main thought is that teaching staff have a good deal of autonomy in what they teach and how this is assessed. This can be an advantage and a boon. However, even if there is good discussion within a small teaching staff, we suggest that the department should share good practice more, such as observing each others' teaching.

1.2. Study programmes findings BA Theory of Culture, MA Theory of Culture

Study programmes and study programmes development

Theory of Culture is one of four subject areas based in an Institute. This Institute is on the cusp of the restructuring mentioned above. The focus of both the BA and MA in Theory of Culture is on culture in its various forms, and studied in a variety of ways, for example cultural theory, cultural geography, literary theory and many others. We picked up no tensions between these approaches and areas as experienced by teaching staff or students. There is also an emphasis on interdisciplinary teaching and research with a number of other areas, such as Philosophy and Anthropology. This interdisciplinary ethos helps to orientate much of the curriculum and the approach to teaching.

Both degrees aim to produce graduates with a grounding in theory of culture and to produce graduates who can think critically about culture in a variety of ways and applying a range of methods. Graduates should be prepared for a wide variety of careers such as journalism, publishing, and consultancy.

Strengths and Areas of Improvement

- The subject areas studied are as one would expect in this type of degree. New courses have recently been introduced (Spring 2014) that increase the amount of practical writing that students do. The interdisciplinary nature of the BA programme in particular is thought to be a strength by staff and students alike.
- Course evaluations by students are strong. Student numbers are under threat of decline reflecting national demographic trends, although currently they are sufficient. The department acknowledges that it needs more staff who bring an international expertise.
- There is a close-knit, lively community in which students are supported. There is a good student body which acts as a forum for student views.
- At the moment at which we visited there was uncertainty amongst some staff as to what

the future restructuring will bring. The Institute has just hired a research officer who will be able to help staff prepare research applications of various types. This is to be welcomed.

- There were no major issues around staff teaching and administrative workload. Whilst there is some appetite to make use of alumni, nothing had happened yet, in part because the current focus is on other matters.

Recommendations

- Whilst student numbers are adequate, there are national pressures and so the department should think about how it might ensure that numbers remain good.
- Thought should be given to ways of bringing in visiting international experts.
- We recommend that alumni pages are created, that an alumni network or similar is created and that over time alumni and activities with them (e.g. employability workshops) are integrated more into the life of the programme and Institute.

Resources

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The physical infrastructure in which the department teaches and operates is good. Teaching spaces are well-equipped, roomy and light. The Library is well-stocked and a pleasant working environment, and all participants that the Panel met reported no major problems with access to books and journals. We also thought that the standard of spoken English of the people we met was high.

Teaching and Learning

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- There is a variety of teaching methods, even if lecture and seminars are the backbone of teaching. There is a variety of assessment methods, although most courses rely on some combination of short or long essays, exams, presentations (single or group) and general seminar participation.
- Teaching staff have a great deal of autonomy in how they design, teach and assess their courses. Whilst staff talk a great deal about what they teach at staff meetings, there is little observation of others' teaching, and no sharing of, for example, exam questions. Staff do interact more, however, in research seminars.
- Teaching staff are very accessible to students, both in person and over email, and there is a healthy relationship overall between teaching staff and the student body.
- In our discussion with students (below) we found that whilst they can talk about jobs they are interested in, and can talk well about work experience they have had, they were not so good at articulating the skills that they had learned in studying.

Recommendations

- Teaching staff should consider observing each others' teaching in order to learn from each other. Such a system can be supportive and helpful for all concerned.
- There should be some sharing of assignment tasks and question, and feedback on assignments, again so that staff can learn from each other as to how they are assessing students and what the quality and quantity of feedback that is given.
- Thought should be given about how transferable skills are exemplified through the curriculum and making it more explicit to students how they are gaining valuable experience for the world of work.

Teaching Staff

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- Although there is a small number of staff, they cover a good deal of the curriculum and that they are able to support the student body. There was a concern raised that with so few staff, some areas of the subject could not be pursued as deeply as is ideal. The nature of the contracts of teaching staff is a concern as well.

Students

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The Panel met students who were articulate, motivated and happy within the department. There seemed to be good interaction between the BA and MA students within the department.
- We commented on transferable skills above.
- We found that the employment rate for Tallinn students on these programmes is good.
- Students felt that their evaluations of courses had an effect, with one example being provided.
- Whilst the number of students going abroad for part of their studies is on the low side, students offered good accounts of their and friends' experiences. One obstacle they did note was the paperwork involved. The office that assists students going abroad was praised.
- Combining a (sometimes) heavy working life with studying is common amongst some students, reflecting national trends.

Recommendations

- Current students who have been abroad are used more in some capacity to help motivate

other students to consider this option.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

This is a department that clearly cares about the subject and its students, a department that behaves well towards its students, and a department that is currently in the process of change. The care that teachers give their students is to be praised and encouraged. Teaching staff have a good deal of autonomy in what they teach and how this is assessed. This can be an advantage and a boon. However, even if there is good discussion within a small teaching staff, the department should share good practice more, such as observing each others' teaching.

1.3. Linguistics (MA)

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The Linguistics MA programme was launched in 2002 but it will be discontinued in its present form starting in 2015 September, when an MA programme with the new title 'Linguistics and Language Editing' will be launched, mainly to address the issue of small numbers of applicants. The decision to launch the new programme was made in Autumn 2014. For the purposes of this report, it might make more sense to comment on the curriculum of the new programme, but we received no information on that.
- The general objective of the current Linguistics MA programme is to train specialists in linguistics who would be able to continue their studies at PhD level or work as a researcher, instructor, writer and editor of language. The general learning outcomes are mainly related to academic work or more generally to research, and the current curriculum supports well the achievement of these outcomes. The current activities included under "Practical training" include only skills related to academic activities.
- From the information we received, it seems that a programme called "Language Editing" (on which no information was offered) will be integrated into the linguistics programme, possibly to add a more practical element to the curriculum, and hence increase the number of applicants and employment opportunities. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to judge how the new study programme will achieve this goal, for lack of information.
- There is a partially effective monitoring system of existing programme development, with input from various stakeholders through the programme council. However, from what we could learn, the planning process for the new programme lacked any basis in research into potential employment, into interest in the programme, into a systematic comparison with similar programmes and their strengths and weaknesses.

Recommendations

- If further major changes of the programme are contemplated, the planning process should include analysis of potential interest, research into potential employment opportunities and other measures of feasibility.

Resources

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The teaching environment, the library and the teaching materials were adequate for the needs of the programme. There was a high level of satisfaction with these aspects of the programme both among faculty and students.

Recommendations

- We note here the general problem of faculty salaries not being sufficiently competitive in the employment market. However, addressing this problem is possible only in a larger context, so we cannot offer a particular recommendation.

Teaching and learning

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The programme has a relatively small number of students and class sizes are small, which offers a lot of opportunities for interactive teaching and students can receive a lot of attention from the faculty. There is a justified preference among faculty members for face-to-face interactive teaching compared to forms of e-learning. The course of study is flexible, offers opportunities to specialise (and presumably this will be the same, or even better, in the new programme).
- Faculty members mentioned the availability of courses to develop teaching and assessment skills and in curriculum design, some of which they found useful. The self-study report mentions a variety of assessment methods (a grade resulting from assessing seminar presentations, essays and exams). However, three out of the five sample syllabi of courses in the Linguistics MA included in the self-study report seemed to rely on assessment based on one end-of-the course exam (in some cases, a requirement of independent work and presentations was also mentioned, but these did not seem to contribute to the grade received in the course). In one case, the assessment method was not indicated, in another case, a variety of assessment methods were mentioned, but it was not clear how they contribute to the final grade.

Recommendations

- We recommend that faculty members consider including a variety of assessment methods in their courses, possibly including formative as well as summative forms of assessment. When different assessment methods are included, the syllabus should be clear on how they contribute to the final grade.
- We recommend checking that overall, the courses in the programme provide assessment for a sufficient variety of skills (analytic, presentational, cooperative, independent, lexical, etc.)

Teaching staff

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The teaching staff are well qualified, with some faculty being internationally present and publishing in internationally competitive venues. The faculty is committed to teaching and to the students. All faculty members participated in courses to develop teaching skills.
- The student evaluations are positive (apart from a couple of exceptions, for instructors who are outside IELC). Students appreciate and value the instruction and attention they receive from faculty members.
- Most of the faculty seem to have a large or very large number of publications according to the data recorded in ETIS (often 5-10 items of publications per year), but the quality of the publications is very varied, in some cases the majority of publications being only in Estonian and in Estonian venues whose quality the panel was unable to assess. The panel suspected that the number of publications may be related to formal criteria about numbers of publications for grants and renewal of appointments.
- There was an element of uncertainty among faculty about the changes concerning the structure of the institutes and the nature of the programme. Faculty of IECL seemed to be generally unable to articulate the particular strength and distinctive characteristics of their programmes (though in some cases this may have been due to a linguistic barrier).

Recommendations

It would be advisable for faculty members to have a more focused publication strategy, that aimed at possibly fewer, but more consistently high quality publications. Senior and internationally active faculty could advise others on this topic. We realise that some requirements for publications are determined by bodies outside the programme or the university, so this issue may need to be addressed in a larger context. We recommend that even in the existing framework, attention is paid to producing high-quality publications.

Students

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The students we met were motivated and were satisfied with the programme. They seemed to be aware of employment opportunities provided by their training also outside academia. They appreciated the societal importance of cultivating the study of Estonian language.
- Students from IECL in general seemed uncertain about changes to the institution and their programmes, and some of them felt that they were not involved in these.
- The level of spoken English in the group of IECL students we met (compared to other groups of students) was somewhat uneven.
- The Linguistics MA programme has a very small number of students (used to be 2 students admitted a year, 4 per year in 2011-13, and 7 admitted in 2014).
- The dropout rate is high, but statistics are not reliable for such a small sample. As far as we could see, the dropout rates were connected to the general factors present in Estonia (students often work while they are studying), rather than to anything specifically about the programme.
- Some students mentioned the difficulty of going to study abroad if this means missing some essential classes that they need for graduation.
- Students in IELC were not sure how the student evaluations are taken into account by faculty.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the programme pursues all the current and planned action to support students in order to prevent dropouts.
- With the future programme, we recommend providing assistance and counselling to students to form realistic employment plans after their graduations.
- It would be useful if students had an awareness of their evaluations being taken into account.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

This is a programme with good resources: committed and qualified teaching staff, motivated students, a very favourable student/staff ratio. The programme is relatively new and is undergoing further changes. The panel felt that a cohesive identity has not been created for the programme yet. Creating such an identity, supported by a careful planning process, is going to be the most important task for the coming years.

1.4. *Literary Studies (MA)*

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The Literary Studies MA programme was launched in 2002 but it will be significantly restructured from 2015 September, when it will incorporate the Romance Studies and German Philology programmes which were discontinued. The decision to launch the new programme was made in autumn 2014. For the purposes of this report, it would make more sense to comment on the curriculum of the new programme, but we received no information on that.
- The general objective of the current Literary Studies programme is to prepare students to enter a PhD programme, or for working in cultural areas for example as critics and editors. The current curriculum offers a general grounding in literary theory, specialisation in certain areas and in Estonian, Swedish, Finnish or Baltic literature. The practical elements seem to be in focus only in a 4-credit “Applied Activities” course. The students we met found the practical elements useful and felt that even more would be welcome in the curriculum.
- The self-study report mentions that a comparison with a similar programme at Tartu University was made in 2013, and it was found that in the Tartu programme, Estonian literature is combined with world literature and theatre studies. Hence one distinguishing feature of the Tallinn University programme seemed to be a focus on Estonian literature. However, by integrating German Philology and Romance Studies into the programme, it is not clear to what extent this character is preserved. There is also an English language MA at Tallinn University on Comparative Literature and Cultural Semiotics.
- There is a partially effective monitoring system of existing programme development, with input from various stakeholders through the programme council. However, from what we could learn, the planning process for the new programme lacked any basis in research into potential employment, into interest in the programme, into a systematic comparison with similar programmes and their strengths and weaknesses. The German Philology and Romance Studies degrees were apparently closed down because of the small number of applications. It was not clear how the integration of these programmes into Literary Studies will help to boost application numbers.

Recommendations

- The programme council could further consider the distinctive character of the programme in light of the recent changes, and emphasise this in the publicity about the programme. If further major changes of the programme are contemplated, the planning process should include analysis of potential interest, research into potential employment opportunities and other measures of feasibility.

- We also recommend considering the introduction of more practical subjects, possibly in the form of electives, which prepare students for employment outside academia.

Resources

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The teaching environment, the library and the teaching materials were adequate for the needs of the programme. There was a high level of satisfaction with these aspects of the programme both among faculty and students.

Recommendations

- We note here the general problem of faculty salaries not being sufficiently competitive in the employment market. However, addressing this problem is possible only in a larger context, so we cannot offer a particular recommendation.

Teaching and learning

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The programme has a relatively small number of students and class sizes are small, which offers a lot of opportunities for interactive teaching and students can receive a lot of attention from the faculty.
- There is a justified preference among faculty members for face-to-face interactive teaching compared to forms of e-learning.
- The course of study is flexible, offers opportunities to specialise (and presumably this will be the same, or even better, in the new programme).
- Faculty members mentioned the availability of courses to develop teaching and assessment skills and in curriculum design, some of which they found useful.
- The self-study report mentions a variety of assessment methods (a grade resulting from assessing seminar presentations, essays and exams). The syllabi contained in the self-study report employ a range of assessment methods. In some cases, the contribution of the different assessment methods to the final grade was not entirely clear from the syllabus.

Recommendations

- We recommend that all course syllabi make clear how the final grade is calculated from the different types of assessment.

Teaching staff

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The teaching staff is well qualified, and committed to teaching and to the students. The faculty includes scholars who are leaders in their field in Estonia.
- All faculty members participated in courses to develop teaching skills. The student evaluations are positive. Students appreciate and value instruction and attention they receive from faculty members.
- Most of the faculty seem to have a large or very large number of publications according to the data recorded in ETIS (often 5-10 items of publications per year), but the quality of the publications is very varied, in some cases the majority of publications being only in Estonian and in Estonian venues whose quality the panel was unable to assess. The panel thought that the number of publications may be related to formal criteria about numbers of publications for grants and renewal of appointments.
- There was an element of uncertainty among faculty about the changes concerning the structure of the institutes and the nature of the programme. Faculty of IECL seemed to be generally unable to articulate the particular strength and distinctive characteristics of their programmes (though in some cases this may have been due to a linguistic barrier).

Recommendations

- It would be advisable for faculty members to have a more focused publication strategy, that aimed at possibly fewer, but more consistently high quality publications. Senior and internationally active faculty, possibly also from outside the programme, could advise others on this topic. We realise that some requirements for publications are determined by bodies outside the programme or the university, so this issue may need to be addressed in a larger context. We recommend that even in the existing framework, attention is paid to producing high-quality publications.

Students

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The students we met were motivated and were satisfied with the programme. They appreciated the societal importance of cultivating the study of Estonian language.
- Students from IECL in general seemed uncertain about changes to the institution and their programmes, and some of them felt that they were not involved in these.
- The level of spoken English in the group of IECL students we met (compared to other groups of students) was somewhat uneven.
- The dropout rate is not high compared to other institutions in Estonia, though high compared to MA programmes internationally. However, the number of students is small,

and statistics are not reliable for such a small sample. As far as we could see, the dropout rates were connected to the general factors present in Estonia (students work while they are studying), rather than to anything specifically about the programme.

- Studying abroad offers fewer opportunities for those who are interested mainly in Estonian literature, but those interested in general subjects and other literatures will probably find several opportunities.
- Students in IELC were not sure how the student evaluations are taken into account by faculty.

Recommendations

- With the future programme, we recommend providing assistance and counselling to students to form realistic employment plans after their graduations.
- It would be useful if students had an awareness of their evaluations being taken into account.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

This is a programme with good resources: committed and qualified teaching staff, motivated students, a very favourable student/staff ratio. The programme is relatively new and is undergoing further changes. The panel felt that a cohesive identity has not been created for the programme yet. Creating such an identity, supported by a careful planning process, is going to be the most important task for the coming years.

1.5. BA Reviewer-Editor

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The BA programme Reviewer-Editor is much more practical and vocational than other programmes (e.g. when compared to MA Linguistics and MA Literary Studies) but we feel that the programme certainly justifies its existence by attracting a relatively large number of students. These are mainly Estonian because the programme is in Estonian and focuses on Estonian language and needs of Estonian society when dealing with texts. As such, this is important for Estonian society and culture and it also importantly justifies the role of the Humanities in this society. The programme shows in a quite direct and practical way what University education can mean for society.
- Even so, the number of students is declining by as much as approx. 45% between 2010 and 2014. The number of students in the first BA year declined from 33 students in 2010 to 19 first-year students in 2014. This is a situation of concern.

- There is also a relatively large number of dropouts, even though this is declining along with declining student numbers. It would be good to analyse why the students seem to be less interested in such a useful field of study, because it does seem that a more practical field is justified to complement programmes such as Linguistics.
- There are elements of this programme which may also be of benefit to students of Linguistics and Literary Studies in the new Institute of Humanities.

Recommendations

- There certainly are modules in this programme that are very useful to students in other humanities fields and also for MA programmes. So, as well as offering an entire BA, the programme could be supported and marketed as being of additional value as practical component in an MA programme. Then it must, of course, take in assessments that meet MA requirements but this would no doubt be possible.

Resources

Strengths and areas for improvement

Up-to-date e-sources are important for this programme because students need the most recent programmes to work with for editing. There were no further comments on the resources and overall the resources seemed to be very good. The new library is superb and serves students of this programme very well.

Recommendations

- None apart from the urge to counter the declining number of students.

Teaching and learning

Strengths and areas for improvement

- No particular comments. The more practical focus of the programme seems to be valued and have its reason of existence.

Teaching staff

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The staff members are very dedicated to their programme and teachers are highly motivated. They had hardly any problems with the teaching environment other than job security. They spoke very highly of their programme and felt responsible towards their students.

Students

Strengths and areas for improvement

- It seems that the students were happy with their programme and found it useful in the work they were doing. We would say that the programme quite visibly contributes to Estonian society. A few students had their own NGO's where they would use language skills and writing skills in a societal context. This surely is to be encouraged.

1.6. Study programmes findings BA Humanities, BA Liberal Arts in Humanities

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths and areas for improvement

- Due to the general nature of the study programmes, students have a considerable number of choices in planning their studies. This allows them to gradually get acquainted with different disciplines and find their own field of expertise. Flexibility likely contributes to successful completion of studies as opposed to a strictly controlled curriculum in this sort of programme.
- The main goal of the programmes is to provide an option for young people who have not yet decided on a specific discipline, but who know their future lies in the Humanities. Another important objective is to integrate people from different backgrounds into the Estonian society and higher education.
- Students may get involved with research even at the BA level, if the topics of their theses or similar interests coincide with research interests of lecturers. Participating in research engages students in their studies and demonstrates both versatility and reality of a discipline, while preparing students for the future already at this early level.
- There seems to be a positive attitude among staff towards students. Despite limited contact with students, many teachers and especially the administrative staff of the programme exhibit a genuine concern for their students coming through the programme. Staff understand the importance of advice and guidance.
- While the decentralized structure enables the programmes to be flexible, it also posits certain challenges. One of them is lack of staff. With no teaching staff entirely of its own and only a few staff with part-time administrative duties, there seems to be a certain lack of personnel resources, which hinders the management of the programmes somewhat. Every-day issues would be better taken care of from both the student and staff perspective, if there were to be more staff allocated for use in this programme.
- Another concern is the flow of information. Teaching staff seem quite unaware of what is

happening in the programmes. This is certainly natural, all the staff being involved strictly in a teaching role, but more informed staff would nevertheless improve the programme's cohesion.

- The students, moreover, seemed rather uninformed even about large changes in the administration and the programme. For instance, student representation in planning the curricula was unknown to the students.

Recommendations

- If possible, increase the number of students especially in the Liberal Arts programme.
- Increase the number of dedicated staff for the programme.
- Improve programme coordination and planning to prevent sudden cancellations of study modules.
- Thoroughly examine the reasons for dropout and act on them.

Resources

Strengths and areas for improvement

- Both study programmes have quite adequate resources, when it comes to the actual learning environment. Libraries have the necessary books, and more can be acquired by inter-library loans if and when needed. Electronic databases are widely in use and easily accessible. Teaching premises are satisfactory and there are enough learning spaces in general use for students.
- For increased flexibility in teaching, electronic resources could be used more extensively, e.g. in teaching. Digitalisation and electronic resources are already a part of any university's everyday life, and will become even more so in the near future. Their efficient use requires, of course, training staff and other expenses, but for a 21st Century university, digital resources are absolutely essential.

Recommendations

- Further explore possibilities of increasing flexibility and applying diverse pedagogic methods by increasing the use of digital and electronic resources.

Teaching and learning

Strengths and areas for improvement

- Teachers seem to have definite freedom in the exercise of their teaching, choosing the precise content and teaching methods at will. Having few limitations as to their teaching motivates teachers and enables them to pick the best option for each matter at hand. Freedom of assessing students is also important to the process of grading as a whole, but see below for further comments on assessment.
- The university-wide system of collecting feedback seems to work well, even if the feedback is rather sparse in quality, if not in quantity. Also, student feedback to individual lecturers seems to have an impact on teaching, which is definitely a good sign of mutual learning going on.
- Advanced teaching methods are used by some individual lecturers. Diverse methods facilitate more efficient learning and answer the needs of multiple kinds of learners. Students may use their time more flexibly, thus improving learning results. There seems to be a desire for using diverse and variable teaching methods. This kind of activity on the part of teachers should be greatly encouraged, with, if possible, concrete rewards for efforts in improving teaching.
- Currently, cooperation between teaching staff seems to be somewhat lacking. This is easily explained by the nature of the study programmes, each branch of a programme having its own teachers, involved mainly with their own institute or other unit. However, comparison of feedback and even marking could lead to further cooperation and improved coordination of the programmes.
- In both programmes there does not seem to be a culture of anonymous examination. Anonymity in this case means that the staff member marking essays, tests and so on cannot know the identity of the student whose work is being marked. In this way, it is guaranteed that no favouritism or bias can intervene in the assessment process.

Recommendations

- Encourage teachers' pedagogic studies to enable the use of advanced teaching methods.
- Increase cooperation between staff in regards to discussing feedback and implementing improvements.
- Introduce anonymous examination at programme level to ensure equity.

Teaching staff

Strengths and areas for improvement

- Due to the nature of the programmes, the teaching staff work in a wide spectrum of disciplines. Being experts in their own area and usually successful researchers in their own right, teachers can vary their approach to what is most appropriate in their own field. This

gives the students an excellent understanding of the different traditions and approaches within Humanities.

- This wide scope of teachers also has its downside. There seems to be little contact between the teachers and limited possibilities for closer coordination of teaching. By increasing these, study planning could become easier, and the curriculum in general could develop towards a more learner-oriented one. The overall cohesion would improve, and the profile of the programme sharpen.
- The university offers a wide range of pedagogical studies and similar help towards improving teaching skills. Better teaching is to everyone's advantage: students' learning results improve, they complete their studies faster, teachers have multiple tools available for different tasks. As teaching does not necessarily count towards furthering one's academic career in the way that research does, there should be concrete incentives for teachers to strive to improve their teaching.
- Finally, the administrative staff of the programmes is small. Because all staff have other responsibilities, such as teaching and research in their own respective institutes, there is a certain lack of staff members whose administrative responsibilities are primarily concerned with the interests of these programmes. Increasing the amount of staff members responsible for academic advice and study planning would facilitate more efficient division of tasks.

Recommendations

- Introduce clear incentives for teachers to develop their teaching skills further. Also: increase contact between teachers and, on the other hand, the administrative staff to improve coordination and study planning.

Students

Strengths and areas for improvement

- Students of the Liberal Arts programme seem determined and focused on their studies. They mostly have clear career goals in mind and have found that the programme fulfils its aim of giving a broad basis in the Humanities. It seems that most students find a direction for their studies quite early on and are more or less able to concentrate on it for the remainder of their studies.
- Due to the nature of its student population, many students in the Humanities programme find it difficult to support themselves during studies. This may be a significant factor in dropping out early in studies. Another reason might be the language barrier for students arriving from abroad. If at all possible, some sort of further support should be introduced.
- Some scholarships are there to be applied for in both programmes, but these are few and

information on them does not seem to reach all students, as is evident from low competition on the scholarships.

- The students do not seem to have a “safety network” apart from their fellow students. Some sort of a student organization or other kind of network would definitely help student integration into the academic community and organize extracurricular activities beneficial to all involved with the programme. Both the university and the university’s student union can be instrumental in providing encouragement and advice to students in organizing such activities.

Recommendations

- Introduce scholarships or other forms of support for students to prevent them from dropping out.
- Encourage the founding of student organizations or similar unions to further deepen the experience of community.

1.7. History (BA, MA)

The Institute of History at the University of Tallinn consists of a substantial number of research and teaching staff. Compared to other European universities the staff-student ratio is very good.

Given its historical background as a purely Research Institute for more than sixty years, the challenge of developing into a fully functioning University Institute has been significant. The staff are highly motivated, some acting as teachers and others only as researchers. As a particular feature of this institution has traditionally been its research activities in various fields, the quality level of students varies.

Increasing the attractiveness of the Institute from outside the university has been understood to be a special task. Certainly, for historians and particularly for those studying political history and the history of international relations, it is of great interest to work in a capital city with its seat of parliament, governmental as well as international institutions, the media and embassies. Therefore a special strength of Tallinn University Institute of History is its proximity to political power in so far as students are provided with a rich political environment and opportunities for internships.

The questions for the interviews concentrated on the status of the Institute and its study programme, student satisfaction, their engagement in research and teaching, expectations of staff in terms of publications, how programmes are devised and implemented, the resources of the Institute, language issues, study regulations in case of academic fraud and improper behaviour, the international standing of the Institute and its staff, conferences, excursions and field trips, (Erasmus) exchange programmes, the practical elements of study such as internships, as well as future plans.

Strengths of the Institute of History lay within the traditionally strong attention to research.

Students and staff are professional and dedicated, staff are accessible, the level of English is high, and mobility rates are reasonable, although they could be better.

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- Being situated in one of the biggest Estonian Higher Education institutions, the Institute of History has to play its role in the structural reforms currently under way and clearly prove that it is also “profitable” in terms of good numbers of history students who later embark on promising career paths. However, areas of improvement may be situated in exactly this field of tension where History plays its role in both preserving tradition and providing means of reform, or to put it differently, where History can lead to reflections on both the space of experience and the horizon of expectations. With students generally being rather pragmatic the Institute of History will have to give an answer to the question whether historical education without the clear perspective of employability, or vice versa, is a desirable way forward.
- While the majority of courses are taught in Estonian, one recommendation is to offer more teaching in the English language, to increase the percentage of overseas staff and equally to raise the profile of History within the Humanities study programme nationally.
- Since the 19th century History has been among the strongest university disciplines and enjoys a great reputation in the humanities. There is the danger, however, that it may lose this position which is partly due to the misunderstanding that it should obligingly follow the economic expectations of employability.
- Another danger may be identified in the ever decreasing margin that remains between research and teaching if modules become more and more defined by the nature of research that is undertaken. Freedom of research and teaching clearly suffers if it is entirely focused on standardized study programmes and not on the individual interests and qualities of the professors. The tendency of standardizing is thus also a tendency of evening out with the possible consequence that the humanities, including History, lose their individualities and that the traditionally high standards for dissertations are moderated. Any “coherence” should certainly not be enforced through political demands.
- The Institute of History at Tallinn University faces these questions and clearly will have a strong answer as to why history is essential for our understanding the present and why it so important for educating young people. The Institute could do more for the visualisation of its work in a broader public; it could awake interest of industry and keep in closer touch with the labour market by establishing networks with possible future employers.
- As for other philosophical disciplines the establishment of an office for the historians to organise their conferences, international and national relationships, closer collaboration with other Estonian universities, and student overseas programmes would be very helpful. To make the place more visible members of staff and students may wish to work closer

with the media situated in a capital city. After all while the University of Tallinn seems to be going along the way of becoming more and more centralised, it is important that the individual institutes including History keep their identity and particularities.

- As environmental history seems to be gaining ground at Tallinn University there is good opportunity to make teaching more attractive, interdisciplinary, and international. The study programme has also been developed in a sense of competition with other Estonian places of higher education which is very much understandable but one could equally see and develop study areas in order to combine Tallinn's strengths with other places' strong fields.
- The programme managers do not seem to have assistants. With such a high number of researchers available (85% of staff) it would be acceptable if researchers were more involved both in teaching and in administration. Thereby teaching could directly profit from the findings of archival research instead of keeping these two fields too separate from each other.

Resources

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The library and teaching material available make a very good impression. The learning environment is very pleasant and resources are rich.
- Facing new regulations with the structural reforms teaching staff should be encouraged to buy more books on international history and on topics which are currently under much greater demand among young students than in previous generations, such as, for example, global history and gender history.
- It would very desirable to have more teaching support staff possibly coming from the areas of the big groups of researchers.

Teaching and learning

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- Teaching and learning in the small history institute of Tallinn University profit greatly from the high qualifications of a research-oriented academic staff. While the internationalisation of staff may be higher elsewhere in the country, the institute may wish to invest more energy in programmes with visiting professors who would most certainly find it very interesting if transnational agendas were inaugurated and non-Estonian ideas of learning were brought into fruitful discussion with the national traditions.
- A highly interesting and valuable course on the history and theory of historical writing often attracts the most gifted students, and there are also links to research and teaching problems of ethnology, for example. Equally the system is quite flexible and quick for

devising new programmes thus openly replying to students' and staff wishes. For this reason students are also members in the board for setting up curricula.

Teaching staff

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The Institute of History has perhaps too many researchers and too few professors and lecturers.
- While students are on the whole happy with the courses and study programmes both in BA and MA, teachers wish for a higher number of seminars with modes of integrated learning at the expense of lectures.
- Those students attending lectures are invited to write brief "lecture diaries" which is an excellent idea to keep in touch.
- All courses are accessible on Moodle.
- Peer reviewing, for example in marking students' essays, is not the rule but practised in cases of disputes.
- Anonymous marking of exams and essays is seemingly unheard of, and could be implemented to safeguard objective assessing throughout the programme – if not the university.
- A closer cooperation between the universities of Tallinn and Tartu is not only strongly advisable but also a wish expressed by the teaching staff.
- Finally what is most needed is much better formulated job security and ideally a tenure track scheme. Too many staff live on short contracts and there are too few permanently employed lecturers who could guarantee a long-run stability in teaching.

Students

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- History Students at Tallinn University describe their studies as an "eye opener" and seem to enjoy them very much. BA programmes are understood to teach historical facts, while the MA studies are meant to learn the skills of writing. Students find courses on gender, environmental, and memory history, to name but a few, particularly interesting, their teachers charismatic, and the combination of study and work manageable.
- However, there is an uneasiness with the structural reforms the humanities as a whole are undergoing in connection with the feeling of a lack of information and insufficient communication.
- Working in an old building such as the historians' offices obviously has some character but also disadvantages. WiFi connectivity, for example, is sometimes inadequate, as is access for e.g. disabled people.
- The students express the wish to have a common room, and this is highly recommended, as it would improve the relations between students and staff essential to an academic

community.

- Also an office in which information about exchange programmes or internships are collected, would be an improvement.
- The students do not feel completely constrained by work and internships but schedules are tight and represent quite a commitment. More extensive use of digital study platforms may possibly relieve the pressure.
- After all, more scholarships would be essential to help young scholars concentrate on their academic work.
- The students overwhelmingly agree that visiting professorships are especially helpful. The existing schemes of professorships with visiting fellows should be strengthened and given great attention.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

In sum, the assessment panel was impressed by the work of the Institute of History at Tallinn University. It would like to encourage the institute to make the most of Tallinn's character as a capital city with the proximity of political, economic, cultural, administrative, and international influences which could be attractive to history students for internships or possibly future job perspectives.

1.8. MA Comparative Literature and Cultural Semiotics

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- This programme is relatively young (operational since 2009) and we feel it holds great potential for future changes. We also find it very laudable that this programme was designed. We understand that it has an idealistic motivation and we feel this is also one of its strengths for supporting the position of humanities in our society as a whole. It is also the only international English-taught MA programme at the University of Tallinn in the area and as such hugely important to set an example for further internationalisation and participation of courses from other programmes as well as to set the managerial agenda for more courses in English. The programme was actually created to meet desire for Internationalization of the University and to form an interdisciplinary programme. It does attract an international group of students and, while it began with very few students, the last year student numbers rose to 12. We would welcome efforts to promote the programme to make sure that student numbers will rise further in the years to come.
- It is the only programme to combine comparative literature, comparative theory and comparative cultural semiotics. It has been compared with programmes at other Universities, also on a world wide scale, but as there actually are few universities with MA in Cultural Semiotics this programme is more or less unique. This understanding of the position of the relative programme is a good thing. Compared with Tartu it seems that the Tartu semiotic programme in English appears to be unique thanks to bio-semiotics whereas the Tallinn programme is more into humanities-related semiotics. Thus, in Estonia the two Universities nicely complement each other.
- The programme managers and designers see opportunities in the new Institute of Humanities after the reform of 24 institutes into 5 because previously existing barriers between independent institutes are now removed (also financially). It means that this programme can now much easier collaborate with courses from many other programmes. It appears that staff from other fields such as specific languages and Theory of Culture also wants to participate in the programme. This seems important in order to make this programme grow and become yet more successful for the general position of the humanities at the University of Tallinn.
- The teaching is excellent and sound in semiotic methodology and there is also attention given to contemporary topics such as post-colonialism and feminist perspectives. These contemporary issues are addressed by some staff members while others are more involved with general approaches (and perhaps more 'conservative' topics, yet importantly valued for insight and methodological training).
- Staff and programme managers indicate that in their programme literature is more important than semiotics: literature is studied as culture with semiotic and other methods.

Commenting on this, we feel that the programme must also be alert to the fact that particular media have specific characteristics which distinguish them and which can be addressed through other methodologies (e.g. anthropology, sociology) in addition to semiotics. The programme offers the opportunity for semiotic methods and analysis to cross with other historical and cultural specificities. In the future there may perhaps be established links with the agency of visual media and their specific aspects as examined in art historical iconology to cross with semiotics. In the same way aspects of materiality of objects cross with anthropology and material culture in general in contemporary society. Given the above, the panel would say the programme must be especially alert to this because they claim to deal with culture in its many broad media and varieties. Of course, broadening the programme can be met by electives from other programmes as well but semiotics as main methodological frame should not be isolated.

Recommendations

- As an English-taught programme we feel it has more future potential than its profile now indicates. It appears to be a very relevant programme for a solid international profile. We recommend to keep focused on that and try to further strengthen this position.
- We also suggest that the management considers implementing other courses from existing modules which are relevant to this programme and update them into English-taught courses. This should perhaps become a financial priority in terms of supporting the staff to help this realise.
- For the programme to further develop and succeed in internationalization of the student groups we would recommend that it is marketed well towards audiences, also abroad via web-info and sites.
- There is an urge to take action to counter the quite high drop-out rate (28%), even though this problem is part of the humanities in general and of the way of financing studies in Estonia without a bursary-system. Staff also began to hold interviews with candidates before admitting them to the programme to give students a good idea what they can expect and prevent unnecessary drop-out in a later stage.
- The implementation of bigger courses, as is indicated for 2015 in the report (p. 40) seems a good idea. Perhaps this may eventually lead to a certain standardized form of specialization within the programme as well because teachers may not be able to attend to students individually if the number of students grows.

Resources

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The resources are very good. Students are most satisfied and do not miss anything. The new library is an excellent place to work and equally well equipped. It has very long opening hours to meets the needs of students who work next to their studies. There are

important study-libraries of internationally distinguished scholars which are good to cherish.

Teaching and learning

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- Although the programme is interesting and challenging for students it is also very, very flexible. This is demanding for students. They must know what they want, as indeed most students with whom we spoke did or managed to find out after the first semester. If students know what they want and work hard and have no personal problems it seems they can get a lot out of this programme. Personal attention and help is provided by staff and support staff, and this is a good thing. However, this also has its dangers, both for Estonian students and for foreign students. Students tend to work alone within a certain topic and as they are the only ones doing this topic it is hard to compare with peers when it comes to content-analysis or indeed any competitive international situation. They can get this from the literature they use but this might not always be so effective.
- Staff has noticed that the level of knowledge of semiotics of international students needs updating when they begin the MA because these students may have completely different BAs and no scholarly training in semiotics as compared to Estonian students. Also, when student number grows there may not be enough core curriculum courses are available and students need to choose electives from other programmes because foreign students cannot take electives in the Estonian language.
- Although there is still a small number of students in absolute terms there is a relatively large number of foreign students. There also is a quite high drop-out rate of 28%.

Teaching staff

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The staff is enthusiastic and idealistic. They give the impression that they want to make the most of the new programme as part of the newly formed Institute and wish to collaborate with other programmes.
- Teachers and management staff studied abroad and used their experiences to adapt other viewpoints to their teaching. All are also very competent and committed to their programme. Some teachers come from the former Institute of Humanities which makes for a continuation of high quality teaching and experience. They feel that content is of main importance and that form of content (digitalization, digital humanities) must not overrule traditional and sound knowledge of semiotics and philosophy for them.
- The programme content has a close relation to research of staff and students are involved in this research. This stimulates high quality knowledge dissemination.

- However, the total of core-staff leading the programme is 7 to 8 and they do not work full time on this programme. Also, two out of the four teachers present did not yet have their PhDs but some of their teaching appears to be crucial to the programme.

Recommendations

- In the next couple of years we recommend to work on fine-tuning of the programme and electives with available staff in other programmes of the Institute. This seems to be acknowledged among the core staff as well. And we would say that it is important for all staff to have a PhD grade as soon as possible.

Students

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The programme certainly seems to meet personal needs and interests of the students who were present during the interview. The students appear to be very determined, motivated and mature. They give the impression that they want to make the most of their studies. Some came for this MA from Tallinn Uni-BA, one from Tartu, three from other countries (Tunisia, Ukraine). The one student from Tartu came to this MA programme in Tallinn because he had heard of its open structure and wanted to combine literature and film adaptations; for the latter, he took modules on film history from a Tallinn media school which was possible in the programme and demonstrates the programme's flexibility. It worked for him, despite some problems in scheduling of courses of the two institutes.
- When it comes to adaptations of courses and indeed the programme as such students appear to give good feedback to the teachers. Teachers also discuss their feedback and act upon it. They update their assessments if these do not work well, for example changing essay-exams and oral presentations into more mixed forms of assessment e.g. with open book exams. Teachers, especially the younger ones, are aware of changes in teaching and learning and respond to that.
- Staff also attends to informing students about the nature of the programme before they begin their studies. When the number of students increased interviews were organised in order to best meet students' expectations of the programme as well as tune in with various levels of students who come to the programme. There is an introductory course in the first semester to get the students with various backgrounds in their BA on a uniform level for the programme.

1.9. BA Anthropology, MA Anthropology

Study programmes and study programmes development

This is a small department with few permanent staff members (two full time and 2 part time) profiled by a strong commitment to the sub-fields of visual anthropology and environmental

anthropology. Teacher/Student relations are close. The department made an appreciated international reputation recently when hosting the large EASA conference. An innovative conference approach was introduced with so-called “laboratories”. The department has started a “pathway” with its Audio-Visual School which has gained attention and numerous applicants. Because of the natural scaling problems of a small department in a small country when attempting to assemble a critical mass of students for courses, a joint Baltic Anthropology Graduate School has been formed with Wennergren Foundation funding which gathers doctoral candidates from different Baltic countries for shared courses. Assured possibilities for graduate training in turn secure interest at the MA and BA levels. Similar scaling problems of achieving sufficient student classroom numbers to justify its financing have caused BA and MA seminars to be merged. So-called “NGO activity” (organized by students) has made available summer school courses featuring many guest lecturers from different countries. The same NGO engagement has been holding workshops in secondary schools to introduce young students to the anthropological discipline, thereby gaining recruits to the department. Prior to 2009 the anthropology programme had adopted the four-field approach according to the American model (with only three staff members!), but now it follows a more European model, enabling more targeted and individualized focus.

Minor Field Studies (MFS) of at least two months in the field are compulsory for all MA students. Great weight is put on the completion of an MA thesis of high standard. In fact, the bulk of point credit for the programme is placed on the final thesis. Hence students are informed from the start that they should choose their courses when possible so as to be directly beneficial to their thesis research project. The MA work is structured so that students must choose a thesis supervisor by the end of the first semester.

Strengths and Areas of Improvement

- The small scale of this department ensures close student/teacher relations. There is also student representation on the department Board. Student feedback is also supplied by the student NGO group. The teachers’ “doors are always open.” Every two weeks students receive a lecture from an external guest scholar.
- All MA students (and many BA students) hold jobs in order to finance their living costs. University education is tuition free on the whole, although some charge is exacted for taking courses which are given in English. The major expense to study at the university in Estonia nowadays stems from lodgings and food. There is considerable dropout from studies, but apparently most of this is at the early stage of study when some of the new students realize that anthropology is not what they thought it would be.
- An obvious weakness of the department, limiting its educational success, is the small number of staff dealing with currently 57 BA students and 22 MA students plus 7 doctoral candidates. The department is able to carry on largely due to its reliance on benefits of the Erasmus and Dora programmes. Students follow certain core courses, but are quite limited in the electives they might choose. Moreover, the electives offered depend totally on the whims of short-term international teacher exchanges. On the positive side, the small

bureaucratic environment surrounding such a small department enables easy decisions and implementation of needed changes. All characterize the department as highly flexible, offering its students much freedom.

- While the impending university reform spreads worry among much of the Faculty, those involved with anthropology are not particularly anxious, knowing that their department is already so under-dimensioned and yet with such a good record that its post-reform future will likely entail no cuts but possibly greater growth possibilities.

Resources

- All seem satisfied with library support. Students enjoy a very new and efficient course library which provides the course literature in comfortable and well-equipped surroundings.
- Apparently the department does offer some support to students for fieldwork if it must occur in another country, but we gained no idea of how much support this might be or how many of those who need it might receive it. Some of the supervision burden is taken by post-docs.
- The department hosts a good English website, attracting a number of foreign students, especially since they are able to study tuition free. The point was also made, however, that some of them may come more for the chance to obtain a Schengen visa than to study.

Recommendations

- It has been an excellent initiative to organize the Baltic Graduate School involving universities in different countries to assemble a sufficient number of doctoral candidates to finance a course, and this is also of benefit for the increased network provided between students and between students and teachers across countries. The same concept might gainfully be employed at the Master level, and reach wider than the neighbouring Baltic States. In both such cases the university should be encouraged to provide secure funding so that these efforts do not sink or swim according to the fate of Wennergren funding.
- Similarly, across the spectrum of the Humanistic disciplines within the same university, there is much mutual benefit which might be gained by incorporating anthropological perspectives into the teaching of courses in, for example, history, music, and even languages. This could add depth to the courses (for example, studies of colonialism and indigenous movements, ethno-musicology, and the historical development of specific languages, or the relations between grammatical concepts and indigenous cosmologies. The courses in other disciplines would be enriched, and anthropology students would enjoy an increased menu of electives with sufficient student enrolment.

Teaching and Learning

Strengths and Areas of Improvement

- Instruction in English occurs fully at the MA level, and dominates at the BA level, although especially at the start of the BA level, there is some teaching in Estonian. Although most of the required course literature is in English, students often find it helpful to get for themselves translations of the English classics in Estonian. MA theses must be written in English. BA students must also write major papers, but these can be submitted in Estonian.
- Teachers and students were all proud in regarding their department as the only one in Estonia for anthropology. They are involved in producing a new introductory anthropological text book appealing primarily to Estonian students with an introduction composed in Estonian but otherwise in English. While they have good cooperation with scholars in visual anthropology and fields of ethnology in Tartu (which might contest the framing of Tallinn as the sole seat of anthropology), in Tallinn they feel that they are freed from any links to Estonian heritage or Finno-Ugric ethnography and can pursue a more open world-wide anthropological programme. Students appreciate the practical and not only theoretical thrust of their anthropological courses. They have a good record of getting their students away on Erasmus programmes, and some of their students have won Fulbright stipendiums.
- Given the small numbers of teaching staff, they are required to teach, even when funded by external grant income. Teaching is in effect subsidized by research. There was some feeling that teachers had not been fully informed of the nature of the impending reforms and restructuring.
- Anonymity in the grading of exams is not exercised. Nor do teachers visit each other's courses (unless the course is co-taught), and there is no co-marking or referral when failing grades are delivered. However, it was pointed out that the reading of BA papers and MA theses is collaborative, performed by both staff and students.
- E-courses have not (yet) been developed, and MOODLE is not used. Instead students and teachers share information via Dropbox and Google drive.
- Plagiarism is taken most seriously, so that first-time offenders are dismissed from the university. There is a service which can be used to check for plagiarism.

Recommendations

- The department should be encouraged to implement anonymous grading. It should be normative for teachers to deliver feedback, not just grades, especially for papers. There is already some use of independent externals when reviewing PhD dissertations, but this might be a concept useful at lower levels as well.
- Teachers do not observe each other's teaching (unless the course is taught in partnership), and this should be encouraged even if only once a year.

Students

Strengths and Areas of Improvement

- Students gave the impression of being highly pleased with the anthropology programme. The students comment favourably on the accessibility of teachers. Students felt that they had received good help to choose their programmes of study. They had had to compose an essay describing their MA study topic and had personal entrance interviews.
- Most students tend to work to gain income during their studies. There was a feeling that they were fully involved in the running of the department and were properly consulted. The students were pleased that their NGO had been consulted in the process of designing the new reform, and even if they do not know what will come of it, they were hopeful that the reform would be beneficial to anthropology. One specific mention was that with the reform they would be far better connected to different language departments where they could elect courses useful to them with respect to their planned region of research.
- Students confirm that some small funding is available to help support their fieldwork MFS assignments, but contend that it is far too limited. Most of their MFS work (that which is located outside of Tallinn and therefore expensive) must apparently be paid for by the students themselves even though it is required. Three out of eight Master students had gone abroad for their MFS work, most with Erasmus programme help. One Master student had come to the department on an Erasmus stipendium and then chose to remain.
- The students must give feedback on their courses before they are able to register for new courses next term. However, although some of their teachers provide feedback to them automatically, others give no feedback unless specifically asked. Some students are shy and feel so respectful of their teacher's time that they never ask for feedback even if they would really want it.

Recommendations

- If feedback is not automatically provided by their teachers, students should be encouraged to cultivate the habit of requesting feedback, and once received, such feedback might be shared.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

- The anthropology programme (as well as the Faculty as a whole) could benefit significantly from the integration of anthropological perspectives into other disciplinary programmes. Not only might this generate a greater breadth of elective courses, but it could also ensure increased numbers of students for classes.
- Anonymous grading of exams and papers should be introduced. It is also recommended that teachers call upon each other to provide a "second opinion", especially when delivering a failing grade. The department should also consider having teachers sit in on each other's lectures occasionally to promote the exchange of useful teaching tips. Co-

teaching of entire courses can be inspirational both for teachers and for students, as it underscores that there is not simply one correct body of knowledge in an interpretive discipline such as anthropology.

- Feedback (not just grades) from teachers on all exams and papers on which grades are based should be normative. If the high proportion of students to teachers makes this an inordinate burden, there are ways in which (if desired by them) students can become “discussants” on each other’s papers, even in groups
- The anthropology department should be highly commended for what it has achieved and for its visible mark on the international anthropological canvas with surprisingly little resources. As it is situated in the nation’s capital city, with programmes dominated by English teaching, it can draw from a flow of international visiting scholars. It has succeeded in creating a small but stimulating environment. There can be no Humanistic discipline which falls outside of a beneficial collaboration with “the study of Man”. Hence the success of the anthropology department and the strength of its student base rest in the main on the (financially supported) creative synergy cultivated by the Faculty as a whole. There is a great potential here for the good of the entire Faculty as well as anthropology in particular which the coming reform should consider. We recommend increased support with the coming reform.

2. Assessment Report of the University of Tartu

Some characteristics of the University of Tartu

The University of Tartu is one of the oldest universities in Northern and Eastern Europe. It was founded in 1632 by King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. The university was founded with the idea of pursuing research and of advancing learning in a wide variety of disciplines. It has continued to adhere to this tradition. There is a long and continuous history of the teaching of humanities in the university. The University is rightly proud of its past and present eminence. It occupies superb and historical buildings in the centre of the city and it possesses an enviable wealth of library resources, so fundamental to the successful study of humanities. The University of Tartu has a prestigious past and is recognised as the leading research institution in Estonia with a clear and expressed commitment to recognise and promote the value of Estonian culture, society and language.

The strategic aims of the university are to ensure an international standard in teaching and research, to attract international students and staff, to further develop centres of excellence, to influence Estonian society, to promote lifelong learning and to maintain and work towards a modern infrastructure.

During the assessment visit the panel saw evidence of prolific research productivity and an excellent teaching infrastructure. The students and staff were clearly committed to their subjects, the standard of English throughout was exceptional, there was evidence of excellent student staff relations and students commented favourably on the accessibility of staff. The panel saw evidence of committed and most capable senior managers in the institution. There were good numbers of overseas faculty staff (approx. 10%) although naturally numbers varied from department to department.

At Tartu, as in other institutions in Estonia, there was a disappointingly high number of student dropouts but little valuable analysis of this seems to have been carried out. It would appear that students are not routinely involved in the management of their programmes and the panel felt that on occasion their advice might have been sought. There was enthusiasm and a valuable resource here that was not being used. Some of the course structures with an accumulation of tiny modules did surprise some members of the panel. Numbers of students undertaking study in other countries were small and the University might want to find ways of addressing this, especially important in the study of the humanities. While it was evident to the panel that students were learning successfully in their respective disciplines, few students seem to be able to articulate the particular qualities and skills they were acquiring in the course of their studies, few seemed aware of the kind of skills they had that would be in demand in society at large. Students commented positively on the manner in which they were taught and assessed but it did become clear to the panel that marking of student work was rarely moderated to ensure parity and equivalence.

Staff were clearly working hard against a backcloth of the most peculiar contractual

position. The majority of the staff seemed to be working on part-time contracts funded by research projects whose future could not be guaranteed. The result was departments with no real sense of stability, therefore lacking the confidence to address long-term and difficult areas in the humanities which demand time and energy. Whilst there is ample evidence of teaching quality in the university the panel felt that the introduction of some kind of peer review, steps that would lead to dissemination of good practice would be beneficial.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no doubt that the University provides an appropriate environment for research in the humanities but the panel saw long lists of publications by staff rather than a selective list of targeted periodicals and monographs, which is where reputation in the humanities can be found. The panel did not get a clear sense from discussions with staff about the kind of support that was offered centrally to assist individuals applying for EU funds.

2.1. Study programmes findings BA Philosophy, MA Philosophy

Study programmes and study programmes development

The focus of both the BA and MA in Philosophy is on analytic philosophy, with some continental philosophy. We picked up no tensions between these approaches as experienced by teaching staff or students, and found that there was healthy interaction.

Both degrees aim to produce graduates with a grounding in four areas (or 'Chairs') of the subject: theoretical philosophy, practical philosophy, history of philosophy and philosophy of science. Whilst students have this grounding, they may specialize. Students also have to take subjects from outside the department. As well as this, philosophy graduates are expected to be articulate both orally and in their writing, they are expected to be able to handle complex ideas and explain them simply to others, they are expected to see the connections between philosophy and other subjects, and they are expected to be able to solve problems. In addition, good BA graduates are expected to be able to undertake MA-level philosophy if they wish, and similarly good MA graduates should be prepared for PhD-level study. A new MA, taught exclusively in English, has been introduced in the past year, and appears to be successful. The MA taught in Estonian has not been discontinued, but is not currently being taught.

The structure of the BA programme in Philosophy has base modules that offer students a good and wide grounding in the subject. These modules are made up of various courses that are typically weighted as 3 or 6 ECTS. We found that the department was currently thinking about how to change some aspects of its BA curriculum and how it was taught.

There is a healthy staff-student ratio of around 5 to 1, in part because staff have been successful in gaining research grants, but also because of some decline in student numbers.

Strengths and Areas of Improvement

- The subject areas studied are as one would expect in a typical and strong philosophy degree. We also think that the recent introduction of a course in which students have to understand the basics of reading and writing philosophy is welcome.
- We found a department that is attempting to address falling numbers in its subject and early drop-outs, by going to high schools to explain what philosophy was and how valuable it was.
- We also saw from the SER and heard from discussion that whilst philosophy students cultivate transferable skills through the programme, these skills are not labelled explicitly as such and there is currently no systematic attempt to map such skills onto the curriculum.
- We also found that there is a danger that courses with the same ECTS may expect different amounts of workload from students.

Recommendations

- It is strongly recommended to review critically how many small courses are offered, and also to review exactly how much work is required for each.
- We also strongly recommend that the department thinks more about how to integrate transferable skills into its teaching and assessments, and thinks about how to make such skills explicit to students. We understand that the department is already contemplating both recommendations (as reflected in their SER), and so we encourage further development.
- Our general recommendation to the Faculty and the University is that every effort is made to arrest both declining numbers and to minimize the drop-out rates.

Resources

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The physical infrastructure in which the Philosophy Department teaches and operates is very good. Teaching spaces are well-equipped, roomy and light. The Library is well-resourced and all participants that the Panel met reported no major problems with access to books and journals. We also thought that the standard of spoken English in everyone we met was very high.
- We did find that students wanted there to be some student area or common room for them to meet in and socialise.

Recommendations

- Ideally, some space should be found for a student common room.

Teaching and Learning

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- We found that there is a variety of teaching methods, even if lecture and seminars are the backbone of teaching. We also found a variety of assessment methods, although most courses rely on some combination of short or long essays, exams, presentations (single or group) and general seminar participation.
- We found that teaching staff have a great deal of autonomy in how they design, teach and assess their courses.
- We found that teaching staff are very accessible to students, in both person and over email, and that there is a healthy relation overall between the department and the student body.
- We found that some teaching staff had provided collegial feedback on each others' courses on a voluntary basis.

- We also found that the **innovative use** (e.g. various e-seminars, quizzes, audio/video recordings, etc.) of Moodle is not widespread. The students who the Panel talked with did not seem worried about this as their study materials are easily accessible.

Recommendations

- We suggest that teaching staff consider further observations of each other's teaching, in order for colleagues to learn from each other. Such a system can be supportive and helpful for all concerned.
- We also suggest that teaching staff share feedback given to students, again so that colleagues can learn from each other as to the quality and quantity of feedback that is given.

Teaching Staff

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- We found that there is a healthy number of teaching staff that covered all areas of the curriculum. A visible proportion of teaching staff is international or have degrees from outside Estonia, which contributes to the international character of the university. Some of them produce internationally excellent research in a very competitive field, and some seem to be highly motivated to contribute to the programme beyond the usual work of teaching and research: in developing international connections, in applying for competitive international grants (there is currently work on submitting a Twinning application for Horizon 2020), in rethinking the curriculum, and in developing new programmes. They are also making an effort to forge a real academic community, with shared interest in research. The department's leadership is thinking very carefully about challenges to the programme and has already considered a number of action points to address these challenges.
- We noted in the general comments above the nature of the contracts of teaching staff.

Recommendations

- That the university management support the efforts of the Department in raising its international profile.

Students

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The Panel met students who were articulate, motivated and happy within the department. There seemed to be good interaction between the BA and MA students within the department.

- We have commented on the drop-out rate above. Although it is only the first year of the MA being taught in English, we note that it is good that the drop-out rate is 0% (of 14 students), and that there are international students.
- Students seemed aware of the various transferable skills that their programmes gave them, even if they did not articulate them readily under this heading. Of the proportionally small number of students we met, they seemed pleased just to be studying their subject and were not so interested in employment, perhaps confident that they would get a job. We found that the employment rate for Tartu philosophy students is very high.
- Students also felt that their evaluations of courses had an effect, with one example being provided.
- The SER noted challenges to recruitment of a sufficient number of motivated and high quality students, and mentioned some action items to address these challenges.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the department follow the action plan to recruit more students. For example, an “Alumni” section on the home page could include successful alumni stories and videos, and also statistics about employment. Whilst it is clear that students feel that their evaluations affect the teaching, it was unclear to the Panel how systematic this was. It is suggested that this be considered further to best use student views.
- We also repeat from above our encouragement that the curriculum integrate transferable skills more and do so explicitly so that students understand how they are developing and how this is useful for their future employment.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

We found a department that clearly cared about the subject and its students, a department that behaved well towards its students, and a department that is changing its curricula. We also found a department that has ambition, both for its students and for its research profile. In particular, it wants its MA to be not just the best of its type in the Baltic states and surrounding area, but known as such. We note also the recent, excellent QS ranking that the department received, well ahead of the University’s overall ranking. This ambition and activity is all to be praised and encouraged. Our main thought is that teaching staff have a good deal of autonomy in what they teach and how this is assessed. We suggest that the department should come together more both to share good practice and reflect on what the curriculum is like as a whole.

2.2. *Semiotics and Culture Studies (BA, MA); Semiotics (MA)*

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The three programmes are run by the same department and team. The Panel has verified that this is the only place known where Semiotics is taught at all three levels (BA, MA and PhD). This fact, combined with the great historic heritage of Juri Lotman, makes the examined unit one of the world leaders in the field.
- Compared to the other departments in humanities here we have one of the highest student/staff ratios, equal to 11/1.
- The concentration of qualified staff gives the possibility of a wide variety of courses in all three programme curricula.
- In addition, the continuity with the great Tartu Moscow School of semiotics gives the programmes a unique profile. The department is the leader in the new field of Biosemiotics too, built on the heritage of J. v. Uexküll. All this positions the department staff together with their students for a leading role in the rehabilitation of the role of humanities in Estonian society, which they acknowledge as a responsibility.
- Still the two programmes in Estonian language have seen a decrease in student numbers recently, even if the dropout rate is not different from other programmes in the same group.
- From the SER the Panel observed that the curricula and study outcomes of the BA and MA in Semiotics and Culture Studies programmes are similar.
- In addition, there is a missed opportunity in both to make more explicit transferable skills in order to encourage graduates to think beyond academic careers. There are many courses in English compared to other European universities, but it still seems that the MA programme in English could benefit from a bigger choice of courses. However, the Panel noted from interviews that the hands of the directors are tied because there is some inflexibility regarding the financing of teaching due to the nature of academic contracts. It is harder in such an environment to plan for the future and develop more English language teaching.
- In addition, the programmes could benefit from an increase in courses that emphasize the vocational aspect of semiotics. This practical turn has already started with the introduction of transferable skills courses in the first years at the expense of the specialized courses, but this seems not to have changed the general trend of reduced interest towards programmes in the humanities.
- The Panel found there to be no systematic contacts with employer representatives. The SER was realistic about this.

Recommendations

- The Panel recommends that the “practical turn” **in all three programmes** should be considered and enhanced, while at the same time, keeping the core Tartu school of semiotics tradition alive. Various specific measures could be considered: invite more guest lecturers from the field of applied semiotics and involve them in academic tutorship; announce PhD positions with research topics in the applied semiotic field; and involve such PhD students in practical seminars for BA and MA students.
- The Panel also strongly recommends involving more strongly external organizations (such as private companies, NGOs, etc.), in the curriculum and the study process, especially in collaboration with the projects of the PhD students.

Resources

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The study programmes in semiotics seem to be provided with all necessary resources for a successful teaching and learning process. The department is situated in a new building with a sufficient number of offices, teaching rooms and even a small space for students’ recreation. Computers are updated. The university possess one of the richest libraries of semiotic literature in the world, and there is access to the major online repositories. The only thing mentioned as desirable in interviews (but not the SED) was the necessity of a university conference centre that could organise and house international conferences. The Panel was not given access to any financial reports, although in interviews the representatives of the Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics stated that they had a deficit of 90,000 Euros. This was explained as being due to the inflexibility of the existing system of payment, which does not reflect the workload of teachers.

Recommendations

- The Panel recommends that consideration is given by the university to establishing a conference office to assist with organizing conferences.
- The Panel also recommends that workload accounting is looked at across the Department and Faculty.

Teaching and learning

Strengths and areas for improvement:

- The Panel found that teaching is conducted traditionally, in the main, using lectures and seminars, with a little multimedia. Assessments are mostly forms of writing with some

presentations. Students seemed to prefer this traditional approach, and are attracted to it. However, in order to attract more and different types of student, different teaching and assessment methods might be tried.

Recommendations

- Learning could be improved through better scheduling and use of online interactive methods so as to help those 80% of students who find themselves having to study whilst working.
- Teaching staff in all the three programmes could experiment more with Moodle so as to enable all students to follow and access materials more easily, and refresh their memories after lectures or prepare better for other teaching events, as well as for the continuous assessment.
- The BA programme team should also be encouraged to go more into schools more to help explain their subject and raise its profile amongst teachers and pupils.

Teaching staff

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The teaching staff is sufficient in number and qualified to achieve the learning outcomes of all three study programmes.
- Tartu is a unique place that offers all three levels of education in Semiotics, and this contributes to the creation of a consistent research community with an important role in the international academic landscape.
- The department organizes regular international seminars, schools and conferences, and its members often present the achievements of the Tartu school to other important forums.
- The department is running one of the most prestigious semiotic journals: *Sign Systems Studies*, founded by Juri Lotman.
- Another point of strength is that most of the members of the teaching staff have benefited from the qualification courses, offered by the university.
- A positive sign for our evaluation was the fact that the majority of the students would like to become university professors like their teachers, seen also in the high grades that students gave to teaching staff. The core problem encountered by the Panel was the instability of the positions of the teaching staff. This system, which is beyond the range of our evaluation, makes the implementation of long term reforms of the study programme difficult at the departmental level. This may be why the study programmes cover the more traditional and classical topics of the discipline, at the expense of innovation and vocational orientation. According to the data we have received, 80% of teaching staff salaries come from such sources and only 20% from stable university funds.

Recommendations

- We have been informed that a reform in the system of the tenure positions is occurring and we hope that it will bring more stability and long term planning for the study programmes.
- We have commented above also on opening up the study programmes to ensure a more diverse curriculum.

Students

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- We met highly motivated students who were fluent in English. They were satisfied with the personalized attitude and teaching that teachers can give them, possibly due to the favourable staff-student ratio. Students are satisfied with the traditional teaching approaches of their teachers, arguing that the introduction of e-learning and modernization of the assessment methods will reduce the quality of the teaching process. There was no difference in the students' attitudes between those from the BA and the MA programmes. This strength of the programme according to the students is also a reason for concern. The decreasing number of students interested in humanities, and in semiotics in particular, brings a polarization: those who choose their programmes have chosen in general a non-practical view of life, oriented towards intellectual self-fulfilment and a critical attitude towards the neo-liberal system of labour and consumption. Such mass of students discourages and provokes the drop out of those who are more practically-oriented and concerned with their professional realization out the university. It is not by chance that the most motivated students were critical of the new system of free entrance and fee free education, as far as they see in it an invitation for non-motivated students to enter the university. The high rate of drop out students was explained by this and with the restricted nominal time for graduation, which is something contrasting with the traditional studies in the humanities, very much dependent on finding one's own rhythm and concrete interests.

Recommendations

- The Panel recommends that the department explore ways in which to attract and retain students who might be interested in things different from that which are provided by the existing programmes, for example, including more practically-oriented courses.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

In the field of humanities, tradition and continuity are strongly rooted, change and reform are exceptional and unusual. When the necessity for practical reforms comes from the outside this is a challenge for rather than source of quality improvement. The teams of the BA and the MA programmes in Semiotics are well aware of this situation and they have taken some measures to adapt to the new realities without losing the “traditional” quality. Our recommendations provide many ideas for modernizing the forms of the transmission of knowledge, combining theory and practice, opening doors towards the labour market, etc. which will be helpful and which enrich the measures already taken by the department. But the major issue here seems to be the particular system of salaries for the teaching staff, which are clearly unstable and in this way discouraging for the teams to enact the long-term need driven improvements of the study programmes.

2.3. History (BA and MA)

The Institute of History and Archaeology at Tartu University makes an overall good impression of a striving institution. The closeness of the main Estonian archives such as the National Archives (Rahvusarhiiv) is certainly a great advantage for research and teaching alike. While archival research seems to be standard for MA students in history, excavations are the rule for students of Archaeology. The institute possesses a good library with substantial collections, among others, also in Russian and in German. MA students are invited to help organise conferences. Thus the general impression is of a close relationship between research, teaching, and even administration with some MA students having already published articles.

The questions for the interviews concentrated on the status of the department and its study programme, student satisfaction, their engagement in research and teaching, expectations of staff in terms of publications, how programmes are devised and implemented, the resources of the Institute, language issues, study regulations in case of academic fraud and improper behaviour, the international standing of the Institute and its staff, conferences, excursions and field trips, (Erasmus) exchange programmes, the practical elements of study such as internships, as well as future plans.

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- Among the particular strengths of the Institute are the library and the open invitation to its students to work with the rich archival resources. Naturally, these sources reflect Estonian history so that for any one wanting to study extra-European history, for example, they are of limited use.
- However, particular strengths of the Institute are in medieval and early modern history as well as in Baltic history in general. This may count for the relatively low number of student drop outs compared to other faculties or departments. Equally students of archaeology

tend to do team work, and appear to be very involved in research activity. Field trips seem to be as important to them as lectures. Some of the MA students can qualify as teaching assistants which is an excellent way of getting involved in the Institute's daily work. The established links with the universities of St. Petersburg, Helsinki, Vilnius, to name but a few, are very impressive.

- As there seem to be too many working students in Estonia in general, an area of improvement may be an even stronger investment in applying for extra-Estonian scholarships. Support staff could be asked to draw more attention to the question of how students finance themselves and how they could be helped with the logistics of applying for international scholarships. Less attention should be paid to administration (including organising workshops or conferences) and more given to the mobility of students, their practical learning and their involvement in the activities of museums, archives, exhibitions, international institutions etc.
- It is important that the Institute is strong enough to keep its best students for the PhD degree and not to lose them for financial reasons. As the number of students wishing to study for a PhD degree is greater than the number of places offered by the University (only three), some thought might be given to other means of acquiring money such as, for example, through alumni.
- Tartu history department could possibly profit even more from the fact that this is Estonia's oldest university. Prizes would be attractive such as for the best undergraduate essay on Estonian history, the best non-Estonian student writing on aspects of Estonia in relation to her neighbours, or on ideas expressed on new historical, art-historical or archaeological exhibitions.
- A principal question the Institute is faced with is how to find a good balance between the interest in Estonian history on the one hand, and the history of other European and extra-European countries on the other. While the Estonian public, political interest, and media may express more interest in the Estonian past and its possible relevance to the present, - with Tartu being the National University -, it is advisable to invest also increasing concentration on Estonia's role for European and extra-European history, such as, for example, on the history of migration and the diaspora in order to illustrate Estonia's roots in Europe and globally.
- For long-term projects such as this it is advisable to set up clear career models and guarantee promotion, ideally on tenure track.
- It is understandable that there is a tension between teaching in the Estonian language and in English, for example, which equally applies to publishing, but overall the Institute may be well advised to invest as much energy in its international standing as in its traditional role of studying the national past and participating in the formation of national identity. History is much too important as an academic discipline and for a wider public and political relevance not to broaden its scope and constantly modernise its methods in order to keep in touch with what is required and reflected about in the 21st century.
- A strength expressed by the representatives of the disciplines of Art History and Archaeology lies in their being closely related to practical work, be it in trenches or in the

museum. While all disciplines may want to be more successful in finding new ways for funding, they could also be encouraged to do more interdisciplinary work. The Erasmus programme with universities such as Freiburg and Greifswald and with MA students usually going for one term, is well established.

- The complaint that there are too many lectures and too few seminars, while some courses are not even available each year, comes from both teachers and students.

Recommendations

- It is therefore advisable to reduce the number of lectures and involve students more in modern types of seminar teaching.
- Courses across the disciplines could be taught not only on the history of the discipline, but on its individual theoretical and philosophical backgrounds in comparison with the neighbouring disciplines.
- It may also be recommended to keep the curriculum under constant review and to note what other universities within relatively close reach are offering, such as Tallinn, for example. It may thus be more useful for the humanities in universities to contribute to a common goal but with different perspectives than to compete for the same ground. In this respect the particular strength of Tartu humanities and history in particular remains its tradition. Combined with constant innovation, tradition is a heavy weight which students usually find attractive.

Resources

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- Resources such as teaching materials and aids do not seem to be a big issue with both libraries and collections being well equipped. However, funds initiating more projects are very limited. The ideal closeness between museums, archives and the university clearly helps in encouraging visiting professors to come to Tartu. There should be more investments made to invite scholars from abroad to Tartu which in return could be followed up by academics and students alike to visit the place where the visiting professor comes from. As finances are often tight in this matter this could be jointly organised with universities within easy reach such as Helsinki or Uppsala, which would also make it more attractive for visiting professors from far away (United States).

Recommendations

- The programme of guest professorships is quite successful in other European universities; it helps to strengthen links without being too cumbersome to organise. Such activity clearly depends on individual contacts being established usually through research, and broadens

the teaching programme without burdening it with too many administrative tasks. Altogether the university should invest more resources in this by profiting from the very attractive “Tartu-factor” and equally understanding that some guest professors can bring in their own funding as well, at least as far as the travel costs are concerned. In quite a few cases the impact of visiting professors can go so far as to establish joint international projects such as joint excavations, collaborations in editing historical sources, or organising international art exhibitions – in any case Tartu university would need to provide initial funding.

Teaching and learning

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- Teaching and learning for historians, art historians and archaeologists greatly profits from “field work”. The Institute encourages its staff and its students to start with this at an early stage, often even BA theses are based on archival research. For this reason (but not only for this one) the number of lectures should be reduced and some courses or seminars could be modified in so far as active student impact is taken more strongly on board.
- In general teaching and learning seems to be very successful in the history department, and rewards for the best teacher may well encourage this. Student evaluation forms are principally used, courses for the improvement of teaching undertaken. Teachers and students should regularly be reminded that this is meant less as a means of “punishing” or controlling the individual teacher but of encouraging him/her in his/her daily work.

Recommendations

- As students generally enjoy excursions/field trips very much, there should be more money invested in this great opportunity of learning in the field. As its results could be brought together in a joint publication, for example, this may also attract the broader public and the media.

Teaching staff

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The teaching staff is highly motivated but unhappy with the lack of resources. While the libraries are said to be well equipped there could be more money made available for excursions, for example, as everyone understands how relevant they are for both research and teaching humanities.
- A further difficulty is the fact that the majority of the teaching staff does not work on

permanent contracts. At least those who have permanent responsibilities in the regular curriculum and therefore less time for research and publishing should be provided with more stable contracts.

Recommendations

- Teaching staff who have permanent responsibilities in the regular curriculum and therefore less time for research and publishing should be provided with more stable contracts.
- More money could be made available for excursions.

Students

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- Students in general find the courses provided by the Institute of History attractive and stimulating. It is their deliberate and informed decision to have chosen the programmes.
- However, it would seem that the curriculum too may, to some extent, be responsible for the dropping out of students, and that it is not only their uncertain job perspectives. Most of them do not find resources a problem although the impression is that archaeology students are “better off” than those, for example, who study general history.
- The majority of students interviewed wished that there were fewer lectures and found the MA programme better than the BA programme, as in MA the classes are smaller and more interaction with the teachers is possible.
- Most of the students work full time and wished that more scholarships or other ways of financing their studies were available.
- As quite a few of the teachers are living in Tallinn, history students of Tartu University wished to see their teachers more often in their place of work and thus be more accessible. This could contribute to better communication, to a better exchange of ideas between teachers and students about the results of the evaluation forms, and finally possibly to more information about studying abroad, scholarships etc.
- Some students claim they wished to have a stronger voice in the academic politics of their university, but this was not unanimous. Investigation into the reasons for discontent could prove fruitful for all involved. The general impression is that particularly on the student level a coherent student “body” is not easy to find.

Recommendations

- Consider the forms of teaching that are most suitable in these disciplines.
- Seek to improve communication between staff and students.
- Consider raising the role of students in their discipline and in their university.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

In sum, the assessment panel found an impressive Institute of History and Archaeology at Tartu University which is strongly committed to research and teaching alike. It would like to encourage the Institute to make the most of Tartu's prestige as Estonia's oldest university while also investing more to become a leading innovative and modern History Institute in Northern and Eastern Europe. The panel suggests that the Institute finds a good balance between teaching and researching national history and transnational, possibly global history.

2.4. Study programme findings MA Ethnology and Folkloristics

Study programmes and study programmes development

Strengths and Areas of Improvement

- This is a relatively small programme, with a high staff-to-student ratio, enabling close contact between students and their teachers. From 2010-15 the average number of students has been stable at approximately 27. Approximately eight new MA students can be accepted to the programme each year. The number of graduates has improved significantly over the past few years. This level should be sustained.
- The Institute of Ethnology and Folkloristics was established only eight years ago, but was extremely vulnerable and small. Hence they were restructured, Ethnology moving out of History and into Cultural Research. The BA and MA programmes are administratively distinct, but this appears to cause no problems whatsoever when moving between programmes. It is a matter of labelling that does not affect the programmes negatively. There have been significant advantages from the reorganization. The staff feels that the reorganization has increased the esteem of their work and field in the University organisation and their visibility in local society. The reorganization also gives the MA programme increased visibility and a greater ability to form links to other universities abroad. Prominent examples of the international links are the collaboration and student exchange programmes with universities in India and their long-standing engagement bringing students to work among the small peoples of the Russian north. Along with more opportunities for international student exchange (e.g. the BA has inter-European exchanges with Poland), this has led to an increase in internal student mobility as well. While the visibility of a separate MA programme has resulted in that 50% of the students now come from other studies, it must be noted that the overall number of MA students is low, only 6-7; see also below under the section for students.
- A fine example of their engagement with Estonian society at large and media is the collaboration of members of the department with the design of a special exhibit entitled "Estonian Dialogues" which will be associated with the inauguration of the new Estonian National Museum.

- They are justifiably proud of the diversity which their programme offers their students, encompassing such things as literature studies and theatre studies as well as film making and music, all of which can be integrated with their core academic studies of a more standard anthropological/ethnological and folkloristic nature. Ethnology and Folkloristics in Estonia has grown from deep historical roots and strong traditions, becoming all the more important for the country's national identity after the demise of the Soviet State. This is something to build from with advantage, and yet there is also the strong need to keep abreast of the swiftly developing trends of the disciplines in the international arena. The Institution holds a wide traditional expertise which it has no intention of abandoning, while at the same time it is further developing its English-speaking courses to increase yet further its international interface. The key approach to meeting this challenge is acknowledged by them to be a process whereby they engage increasingly in the realm of civic, public service and thereby demonstrate how the past can be pertinent for the present. Good examples of research of benefit to current social needs is that of an MA student who studied work commuters to Finland and who therefore could identify actual conditions and pressing needs of a largely ignored work force. One of the teaching staff has initiated studies focused on punk culture, thereby appealing to contemporary youth while promoting folkloristic methods and theory. They collaborate with a literary museum and archives in which are stored sources since the nineteenth-century. After being freed from Soviet-rule this has become all the more important. Memory studies further connect to oral history and life-narratives as an anthropological approach in the form of urban memories and contested places, importantly so with regard to the Second World War and for Russian family memories.
- Financially they are also now in a far better position than before, even if they see funding cuts looming. The MA programme is a so-called "targeted discipline" by the State which gives it increased funding, helping it to overcome the previous need to release some staff members. They have also benefitted greatly through their association with a Centre of Excellence, enabling them to fund some MA fieldwork. This Centre has been a time-limited, seven-year construct, soon to be shut down, but because of its success and a renewed application, there is good hope that it might be renewed.
- The MA programme focuses on three main branches, each of them important to Estonia. These are the Arctic, Religious Studies and Cultural Heritage. All students study a core curriculum, but for credits corresponding to about one semester of study are able to choose studies specifically of Ethnology or Folkloristics. New regulations permit students to complete a practical project as an alternative to the writing of an MA thesis.
- The issue of departmental title was discussed at our meetings, as the question was raised if the name "Ethnology and Folkloristics" appeared too out-dated to encompass the breadth of courses taught, thereby inhibiting recruitment of students seeking an international profile. Teachers could agree with this point, but had purposely desired to maintain these older disciplinary headings because of the continuity they signalled with a wealth of traditional high-quality Estonian research and the strategic advantages this provided them for government support when positioned as guardians of Estonian heritage. These are

significant points, but it should nonetheless be possible to do both, i.e. to signal a modern disciplinary thrust while maintaining sub-disciplinary traditional strengths. Otherwise, even though grossly unjustified, we have found that these programmes run the risk of being belittled as concerned primarily with Estonian folkways and the quest for greater Finno-Ugric cultural roots.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the programme council of the Ethnology and Folkloristics Master curriculum consider “upgrading” its programme title. Course content is beyond reproach, but the programme might avoid dealing with some misguided applicants and student dropouts if the programme title were to reflect more adequately course content. This can also pave the way for even further increased collaboration with universities abroad.

Resources

Strengths and Areas of Improvement

- Not only is the university library an excellent, world-class research resource, but there is also close at hand the national archives in Tartu (offering students temporary apprentice positions). The Institute’s own building houses a small but convenient ethnology library and there are nearby archival facilities which not only serve student research needs, but also provide them with the possibility of work as trainees.
- They manage to receive the support necessary to attend important national or international conferences.
- Student essays can be published in the Yearbook of the Estonian National Museum.
- There is a constant stream of visiting foreign lecturers.
- Internet facilities are well developed, and Moodle is used regularly both to give access to literature but also to provide feedback.
- Besides regular classes, students can also enjoy small tutorials with their teachers, composed perhaps of no more than one or two students together with a supervisor. Students also prefer to get personal face-to-face feedback instead of online comments.
- Issues raised on the negative side were few and often tended to revolve around the desire for more funding. Naturally, staff members want higher salaries, improved job security, and the possibility for promotion based on merit and not just (lack of) funding possibilities. Yet general structural changes of national policy perspective can hardly be entertained here, even if such constraints are, of course, highly determinative of educational strength.

Teaching and Learning

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- The programme is attentively monitored and open to improvements. Both teachers and students appreciate the breadth of topics grasped by the programme and also the close contact they share with each other. A number of elective courses taught by teachers on their particular fields of interest and expertise add further breadth to the core programme. MA students and PhD students are often taught in joint classes. Students are pleased with their supervision and ability to engage with the research of senior staff. Those with an Arctic orientation have been enabled to enter the field in Russia, and those with a folkloristic bent have found hands-on experience not only in Estonia but also in India and beyond through exchange programmes.
- The BA programme offers most of its classes in Estonian, but English is increasingly dominant at the MA level. However, while it is important that more courses are offered in English, Estonian remains essential for most of the fieldwork which is performed in Estonia.
- Dropout level has been high here, as in nearly all areas of the humanities, and is generally attributed to national demographics and the slump in youth numbers of student age. They do admit, however, that some dropout is occasioned because some students enter their programme with a skewed concept of what the discipline entails, leaving once they realize that Folkloristics, for example, is more than just telling stories. Of course, by the MA level, students have a clear idea, but for students entering the BA level, teachers have begun to provide information from the start about the content of the programme to counteract frequent misconceptions, while continuing to relate what is expected of them, and what future job opportunities are most often open to them. There has recently been a revision of their curriculum with new “speciality” and “practical” courses being offered, and it is impossible yet to see what effect this might have on dropout rates.
- Points where there might be room for some improvement relate to grading and feedback to students. Students reported that they sometimes received grades for their papers but without any further clarification of what was good or bad about them. They might be able to solicit feedback from a teacher, but would not receive it unless they asked for it, and asking was quite uncommon as teachers were known to be busy. For some subjects an informal open-door policy which might facilitate students to ask for feedback was of no account, as offices were regularly vacant; the teachers were living in Tallinn and came to Tartu only briefly to teach. Teachers felt themselves to be easily approachable and responsive if written to, but this is still no substitute for regular weekly consultancy access. We are pleased to learn that students have the option of substituting their study book number for their name when submitting work to be graded, and also to know that double grading is used when the final mark seems to rest between two grades. Anonymous grading is thereby available to students as is the basic protection of teacher peer review. An additional protective step to consider would be to apply the same double review/grading system to any work which is initially deemed to result in a failing grade.

Recommendations

- All teachers should hold some regular recurring weekly office hours open for students on a drop-in basis.
- Where teacher peer-review in the evaluation of failing grades has not yet been instituted, we recommend that such a procedure be implemented.

Teaching staff

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- Teaching staff are very supportive towards individual students. They also write MA students into their research applications, giving them opportunities for learning and research. Teachers have been remarkably pro-active in positioning their students in productive field environments, often accompanying them. They have also been commendable for their success in making national and local Estonian media aware of their disciplines and of the pertinence of their work for contemporary Estonian society.
- When asked about their employment security (tenure) and the clarity of their route to career advancement, teachers raised some serious issues. Advancement based on criteria of pedagogical skills in relation to research (publication) merit seemed blurred, as were how these both in turn were governed by criteria based on the constraints of Faculty or Institutional budgets.

Recommendations

- Questions concerning academic promotions and titles and the various kinds of linkages these may have (or not) with salary raises or increased research time, are most variable and difficult. While we are not in a position to know all of these rules and budget constraints, we recommend that the Faculty spell out this situation, whatever it may be, fully and distinctly. There should always be a clear route to advancement of academic position.

Students

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

- This is a small community, so students and staff know each other. Students chose the programme because in their BA thesis they worked with people who inspired them. They liked the engagement with research and some gained work experience in the field while they studied. On the whole, students were satisfied with departmental and university resources.
- Allocations which might be entertained on the university/departmental level concern the need to provide space for a student/staff common room, since the space used formerly for

this purpose has apparently been of necessity appropriated for use by the many visiting new international students for work room.

- A desire was expressed for more stipendiums to students to enable them to study more and to work less. Almost all students held external jobs (often full-time) in order to survive, even if they did not have to pay tuition for courses taught in Estonian. Students were highly motivated and take initiatives.
- About 50% of the MA students come to them from different departments. While it appears that the number of their students going abroad with ERASMUS programmes has decreased slightly, the number of students going into exchange programmes has actually increased due to their increased number of exchange partners and the ability to find alternative sources of funding. The development of courses taught in English has enabled them to host more foreign students, and they see that they have a capacity to take considerably more. The constraint is to some degree caused by the recognized need to advertise their English programme courses more widely abroad. On the national level, they have reached out with recruitment efforts. A video has been produced to inspire High School students to enrol, and the department hosts two Facebook pages which have proven instrumental in promoting communications. To ensure that students know what to expect from the program, staff organise intake interviews and request a written statement of study goals. Yet, and as indicated above, there remain students who do not actually realize the nature of the programme and drop out. Despite the broad range of courses offered, some students wish for further or other forms of specialization and are dissatisfied when this is not available.
- Students reported that they sometimes received grades for their papers but without any further clarification of what was good or bad about them. They might be able to solicit feedback from a teacher, but would not receive it unless they asked for it, and asking was quite uncommon as teachers were known to be busy. For some subjects an informal open-door policy which might facilitate students to ask for feedback was of no account, as offices were regularly vacant; the teachers were living in Tallinn and came to Tartu only briefly to teach.

Recommendations

- New space should be allocated for students to use as an informal common room.
- Teachers who do not already do so should be encouraged to post a regularly recurring time each week when they are available at the office for student contact on a “drop in” basis. Long supervision sessions must, of course, be made at other times by appointment whenever and wherever convenient for both parties.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

This branch of the Humanities is impressive. By nearly all the measures of quality and quantity, achievements of Ethnology and Folkloristics compared to that of high-standing western European

nations have been exceptional and all the more praiseworthy when considered relative to allocated funding. This Ethnology and Folkloristics branch is an up-to-date and innovative research and teaching environment, making strong contributions both to national Estonian scholarship and current social debate at large, but also to forefront international discourse in their various fields. Such a tightly-knit group of teachers and students runs the risk of becoming less innovative and proportionately productive with increasing size, and yet for the sake of bringing in stimulus from outside, it is essential that these programmes be bolstered by the introduction of teachers from Tallinn and farther afield, especially English speaking scholars. There is already much exposure to foreign visiting lecturers, but it is also of benefit to recruit them into the permanent staff when possible—a matter well recognized by the staff and with steps already taken towards such ends.

We encourage a name “upgrade” to reflect the modern thrust of the work and the courses taught in these programmes—a change which need not necessitate the abandonment of continuity as guardians of Estonian heritage. We further recommend that teachers be given clear information about the route of their possible academic advancement and what this can entail in terms of salary, research time, and job security. And we encourage all teachers to establish a regularly recurring weekly office time for drop-in student contact, and we recommend that new space be provided for students to serve as an informal common room, since the space allocated previously for this has been appropriated. Where teacher peer-review in the evaluation of failing grades has not yet been instituted, we recommend that such a procedure be implemented.