

Institutional Accreditation Decision

Lääne-Viru College

28/01/2015

The Quality Assessment Council of the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency has decided to accredit Lääne-Viru College for three years.

Assessment Committee

David Cairns (Chair)	Higher Education Consultant, Quality Assurance Research for Higher Education Ltd (UK)
Johanna Heikkilä	Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Senior Adviser (Finland)
Toomas Kuuda	Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Head of Pärnu Office (Estonia)
Danute Rasimaviciene	Vilniaus Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences, dekaan (Lithuania)
Joosep Raudsepp	Tallinn University, student (Estonia)

Component assessment

Organisational management and performance	Conforms with requirements
Teaching and learning	Partially conforms with requirements
Research, development and/or other creative activity	Partially conforms with requirements
Service to society	Conforms with requirements

Strengths and areas of improvement

Organisational Management and Performance

Strengths

- *The College implements highly effective measures to support development of both ordinary and extraordinary academic staff, including encouraging staff's Estonian and international mobility and participation in conferences, workshops, and RDC-related training programmes.*
- *The College is esteemed by its students, employers and other stakeholders in its locality and further afield. Employers benefit from training the College provides for their employees and students have confidence that professional qualifications acquired at the College will give them an advantage in the labour market.*
- *The College has successfully developed "blended learning" – distance learning combined with intensive face-to-face tuition – and the "connective internship" model.*
- *The management systems of the College are effective. It has wisely invested in learning technologies such as video and audio systems.*

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- *The College should ensure that its development planning process, future development plans, and follow-up action plans will include the current forms of study used at the College, such as connective internships and blended learning.*
- *It is necessary to strengthen the College's marketing and external communications because of the anticipated future drop in the numbers of potential students. Through its marketing strategy, the College must raise awareness across Estonia of the studies it offers, including blended learning.*
- *The College should set more ambitious goals for its employees in its Development Plan.*

Teaching and Learning

Strengths

- *The College Curriculum Councils effectively develop new study programmes and monitor the relevance of the content of current programmes to the needs of employers and society.*
- *The College uses modern technical and educational technology tools which effectively support teaching and learning.*
- *The College successfully applies the connective internship model.*
- *The College systematically gathers feedback from its students and takes the results into consideration as it implements changes.*

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- *The College needs to ensure that there is clearer differentiation between the learning outcomes and assessment tasks for its vocational students and its higher education students, and that the learning outcomes for higher education students are clearly linked to the Descriptor for Level 6 on the Estonian Qualifications Framework and the requirements of the Standard of Higher Education.*
- *The College needs to revise its admissions procedures for applicants seeking to enter the College through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and ensure that these are detailed, clearly stated, and rigorously applied. All students applying to enter through RPL must be interviewed and their applications assessed on the same basis as other applicants.*
- *The College should set out appropriate directions for its staff on how they are to make and record the necessary academic judgements about the prior learning of an applicant as well as the learning outcomes achieved, and on how to describe and record any deficits in learning or achievement that will need to be remedied as a condition of admission to study in a named programme.*
- *The College should detail in its RPL procedures, how to evaluate those applicants who have already completed parts of their studies. Also, stringent criteria must be applied to ensure that students are admitted to the final year of professional higher education programmes through RPL only when they can demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes at Level 6 of the Estonian Qualifications Framework, whether through prior formal education or prior experiential learning.*
- *The College should improve its admission arrangements to enable it to better assess the level of applicants, including identifying applicants who are non-native speakers and therefore might need additional support with Estonian language skills, as well as applicants considering alternative*

forms of study (e.g. distance learning or blended learning) who might also need additional support (e.g. mentoring) to enable them to make successful transitions to different forms of study.

- *The College should monitor how individual students studying via distance learning or blended learning use MOODLE and their attendance at face-to-face sessions at Mõdriku, in order to get better and more timely information on their progress.*
- *It is necessary to measure the progress of students more effectively in order to provide better support to those who are less successful with their studies.*
- *It is necessary to more effectively apply measures to detect plagiarism and prevent other forms of academic misconduct. The College could carry out periodic detailed "snapshot" analyses of student papers, or purchase such service from other providers as needed, to make sure that there is no plagiarism or any other type of violation of the code of academic conduct.*

Research, Development and/or Other Creative Activity

Strengths

- *The College has thought through and clearly formulated its goals for research and development, and measures their performance.*

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- *The College defines the development of study programmes as an applied research activity and therefore it is difficult for the College to provide realistic assessments of its R&D achievements, or to set challenging objectives for applied research by specialty. The College's goals for research and development and its Action Plan must be more ambitious.*
- *The College should adopt a more systematic approach to the management of its research and development activities.*
- *To support its development in the field of research and development, the College should appoint teaching staff with PhD qualifications who are actively engaged in professional research.*

Service to Society

Strengths

- *The College's Centre for In-Service Training and Retraining, involving staff from throughout the College, provides a valuable range of in-service training and re-training services, counselling and support, to meet the needs of local, county and national enterprises and bodies.*
- *The College experiences a mutually beneficial cooperation with many companies in Lääne-Viru and other counties, as well as with public authorities.*
- *The College provides a commendable contribution for the advancement of social welfare by offering trainings for elder citizens, serving both educational and therapeutic functions, and a debt-counselling service for Lääne-Viru County residents and its own students.*

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- *Within the framework of its marketing strategy, the College needs to make greater use of social media to promote its activities in the field of vocational education, higher education, as well as in distance learning and blended learning.*

Further information:

[Self-Evaluation Report](#)

[Assessment Report](#)