

ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

Institution: Lääne-Viru Rakenduskõrgkool (Lääne-Viru College)

Assessment committee:

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Coordinator: Tiia Bach

Dates of the assessment visit: 4.11– 5.11.2014

Assessment committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA: 15.12.2014

Assessment committee received the comments of the institution under accreditation: 29.12.2014

Assessment committee approved the final version of component assessment with 5 votes in favour and 0 votes against.

Date: 12.01.2015

I Summary of the assessment (mark with 'X'):

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Organisational management and performance	X			
Teaching and learning		X		
RDC		X		
Service to society	X			

Comments:

Lääne-Viru Rakenduskõrgkool ("the College") is a state institution of professional and vocational higher education. It is located in Lääne-Viru County almost 100 km east of Tallinn. The main campus of the College is outside the town of Rakvere, at Mõdriku, a centre for educational activities that was gifted to the Estonian State in the 1920s. The Mõdriku campus has residential accommodation for students and visitors and there is additional space for teaching and learning with residential accommodation in a College building in Rakvere, which is used for vocational training and higher education programmes, short courses, outreach programmes and extension education. The College operates in conformity with its Statutes.

In 2013 the College enrolled 847 higher education students and 369 students to vocational education studies. It has very few part-time students. In 2013 the College employed 24.8 full-time equivalent academic staff; 35 visiting lecturers; 18.5 full-time equivalent administrative staff; and 14.25 specialist and technician support staff. During the visit of the Assessment committee to the College it met a wide range of staff and

students and tour the College's two campuses. The Assessment committee is grateful for the College's welcome and hospitality during its visit and for the readiness of all those it met to engage with it in an open and helpful way.

The College offers vocational and higher education programmes; it specialises in subjects allied to applied accounting and finance and social work and social care. The College makes its higher education programmes available to students who study full-time at Mõdriku and Rakvere and to students who study the same programmes through a combination of distance learning and intensive face-to-face tuition ("blended learning"). The blended learning mode enables students from across Estonia to study with the College for a higher education qualification while in employment or carrying out caring or volunteering responsibilities. It is supported at the College by six weeks of intensive face-to-face tuition, interspersed throughout the session and a carefully planned and well-developed MOODLE Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The College is to be congratulated for developing and supporting its VLE and this blended learning mode of delivery, which enables students who have successfully completed a vocational programme to study for a higher education programme and is an asset to Estonia.

The College regards its staff as its greatest asset. It has good staff support and development arrangements which include provision for staff to attend conferences, workshops and take training to support research development and creative activities (RDC). The College views curriculum development as a form of applied research. Curriculum development features strongly in the College's account of its RDC achievements, which also includes some publications in the College's specialist areas in learned and refereed journals and items published in other publications. The College now needs to set itself more demanding targets for research and applied research in its specialist areas to support its capacity to teach final year degree students in those areas, supervise their dissertations and provide research and consultancy support to its stakeholders.

A large number of students who are accepted onto the College's higher education programmes have previously undertaken vocational studies with the College itself or other Colleges offering vocational education. Many such students enter the later years of the College's higher education programmes through its Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) arrangements. These RPL admissions arrangements now need to be made more demonstrably rigorous.

The College is esteemed by its students, employers and other stakeholders in its locality and further afield. Employers benefit from the training it provides for employees and students are confident that a qualification in one of the College's specialist areas will be an asset when they seek employment and to advance their careers.

Commendations to the College:

- Its provision of development and support for visiting lecturers on the same basis as for full-time staff
- The use of a workload model to balance the requirements it makes of individual members of staff

- Its systematic support for the international mobility/internationalization of its staff
- Its long-term support of staff training and development for the deployment of learning technologies
- Its support for the attendance of staff at conferences, seminars, workshops and training events to support their capacity in research and development
- Its systematic development and investment in and use of management information systems
- Its long-term and farsighted investment in learning technologies, including MOODLE and video and audio systems, and its development of "blended learning" - distance learning combined with intensive face-to-face tuition, and the "connective practice" internship model
- Its energy in gathering and using feedback from students
- Its maintenance of close and mutually supportive relationships with the business enterprises and social agencies of Lääne-Viru County and further afield which are greatly valued
- Its provision of workshops for elder citizens that serve an educational and a therapeutic function and the debt counselling service it provides for the community of Lääne-Viru County

Recommendations to the College:

- Make reference in its development planning process, Development Plan, and follow-up action plans to internships and distance learning which are making a positive contribution to Estonia and to the development of the College itself
- For applicants seeking to enter the College through Recognition of Prior Learning
 - Ensure that the College's admissions procedures are detailed, clearly stated and rigorously applied
 - Ensure that all applicants seeking to enter into the second or third year of a degree programme through Recognition of Prior Learning, including those applying to study via blended learning, are interviewed and their applications are subject to the judgement of academic staff to assess whether the learning outcomes the applicants have achieved are equivalent to the Level 6 learning outcomes they would have achieved had they undertaken their prior learning at the College
- Investigate how to identify applicants and existing students with dyslexia and dyscalculia and consider how they might be enabled to complete their studies successfully and how to identify non-native speakers who might need additional language support if admitted to study
- Enhance current arrangements to track the progress of students, including those studying by blended learning to provide more timely and detailed information in order to provide more support for those not engaging successfully with their studies
- 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 Government Regulation 178 "Standard of Higher Education"

- Review the effectiveness of its arrangement to detect plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct
- Adopt a more demanding approach to defining and setting its agenda and targets for research and development to assist it in managing its research and development activities more systematically
- Produce a marketing strategy that will promote greater awareness across Estonia of the studies it can provide including through blended learning

II Assessment areas and sub-areas

1 ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

General comments:

The Assessment committee found that there are clear internal management arrangements and that the governance of the College conforms to the requirements of Estonian legislation and its own Statutes. Its Development Plan does not mention the College's innovative use of distance learning and internships.

The Assessment committee **recommends** that the College should consider carefully how to ensure that its development planning process, future Development Plans, and follow-up action plans include key features of the way in which it delivers its higher education provision, such as internships and distance learning, which are making a positive contribution to Estonia and to the development of the College itself.

The Assessment committee notes that there are good internal communications within the College and agrees with the College that it needs to pay greater attention to marketing and external communications. It congratulates the College on the attention it has paid to its personnel and staffing arrangements and on its support for staff development, including for visiting lecturers. The Assessment committee invites the College to set more demanding targets for its staff to attain than those set out in its present Development Plan.

The Assessment committee finds that the College manages its finances carefully and in line with its legal and other obligations and that it makes use of the management information systems it has installed and that are available to it externally to manage its activities. The Assessment committee is able to confirm that the College manages its estate and facilities responsibly and that it takes available opportunities to update its facilities and enhance them, for example to improve access for disabled students and others and environmental efficiency.

The College has adopted content and document management systems, it has developed the MOODLE Virtual learning Environment to meet its educational purposes, and uses information systems to manage admissions and track students. The Assessment committee commends the College on its adoption of information systems to support its internal management.

The Assessment committee finds that Lääne-Viru College conforms to the requirements.

1.1 General management	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements:</p> <p><i>A higher education institution has defined its role in the Estonian society.</i></p> <p><i>The development plan and the related action plans of a higher education institution arise from the concrete purposes that are built on its mission, vision and core values, and that consider the country's priorities and society's expectations.</i></p> <p><i>Key results of a higher education institution have been defined.</i></p> <p><i>The leadership of a higher education institution conducts the preparation and implementation of development and action plans and includes the members and other stakeholders in this work.</i></p> <p><i>Liability at all management levels has been defined and described, and it supports the achievement of institutional purposes and the coherent performance of core processes.</i></p> <p><i>Internal and external communications of a higher education institution (including marketing and image building) are purposeful and managed.</i></p>								
<p>Lääne-Viru Rakenduskõrgkool (Lääne-Viru College or "the College") is a state institution of professional and vocational higher education. The College is located in Lääne-Viru County in a pleasant rural setting almost 100 km east of Tallinn. The main campus of Lääne-Viru College is based outside the town of Rakvere, where the Manor House of Mõdriku forms the core of a series of inherited and purpose built facilities. There is some residential accommodation for students and visitors on this campus and additional teaching and learning spaces and residential accommodation in a College building in Rakvere. The College uses this Rakvere centre for vocational training and higher education programmes, short courses, outreach programmes and extension education. The Manor House at Mõdriku has been a centre for educational activities since it was gifted to the Estonian State in the 1920s.</p>								
<p>Lääne-Viru College was designated as a state institution of professional higher education in September 2007, having previously been a Higher Vocational School formed from Mõdriku Agricultural Technical School and Rakvere Pedagogical School. Before 2007 the College had begun to develop specialisms in accounting, business administration, commerce, and social care. Since 2007 the College has continued to develop and strengthen these areas of activity. The College continues to offer both vocational and higher education provision. More recently, it has added a specialism in business information systems management and a programme for assistant managers to its higher education portfolio and software design to its portfolio of vocational education.</p>								
<p>The Mission of Lääne-Viru College is to "provide students the financial, managerial and social knowledge and skills necessary for life and work,</p>								

increasing their competitiveness and supporting the development of Estonia." The **Vision** of the College is to be "a recognised institution of professional education in the economic, management and social areas" with **Core Values** of "Creativity, Dignity, Applicability, Competence, Cooperation".

The College identifies its **specialisms** as including higher education programmes in applied accountancy; commerce and commercial economics; and social care with a particular emphasis on in-service training in the latter area. The College aims by 2018 to be recognised as the leading provider of applied accountancy in Estonian higher education. The College has developed a "connective internship model" for its internship and work-based learning which builds on the Rector's doctoral research. The College's internship model is considered further in Section 2.1 of this report.

In 2013 the College enrolled 847 higher education students and 369 students to vocational education studies. It has very few part-time students. Again, in 2013 the College employed 24.8 full-time equivalent academic staff, 18.5 full-time equivalent administrative staff, covering a wide range of functions, and 14.25 specialist and technical support staff. Supplementary information provided by the College identified that in addition to the full-time academic staff there are 35 visiting lecturers. All the full-time members of the College's academic staff are women, and women students are in the majority at the College.

Note. In its Self-Evaluation Report and in discussions with the Assessment committee the College and its staff used the term "curriculum" to describe a programme of studies followed by a student. In this report the term "curriculum" is used to refer to the whole of the College's educational provision and the term "programme of studies" ("programme") has been used to refer to the portions of the curriculum that the College has designated for a student to follow in order to gain a particular named qualification or degree award and the associated credits.

To support the assessment for institutional accreditation, Lääne-Viru College provided a **Self-Evaluation Report (SER)** from which much of the factual information in this accreditation report has been drawn. The College's Self-Evaluation Report provided a densely descriptive introduction to the College which the Assessment committee read carefully as it prepared for its visit and meetings with students, managers, staff and stakeholders. Before the visit the Assessment committee found it difficult to interpret the descriptions offered in the SER for the patterns of enrolment and modes of study of those students enrolled for higher education programmes and sought clarification from the College. Notwithstanding this clarification, it was only during the visit to the College, and with the benefit of conversations with members of the management, staff and students, that the Assessment committee was able to appreciate that more than 70 per cent of the College's higher education students are studying full-time, via distance learning, while in employment or undertaking voluntary work, and that these students undertake six week-long periods of residential study at the College interspersed throughout the study year. Likewise, other features of the College's enrolment pattern, such as the number of students being enrolled through the Recognition of Prior Learning from the College's own vocational education programmes and vocational programmes at other Colleges only became clear with the help of the College during the visit.

The **role of the College in Estonian Society** is defined in its Statutes and was stated in the SER to be at the heart of the College's Development Plan

"to be recognised in Estonia and internationally as an educational institution with a modern learning environment providing economic, managerial, entrepreneurial, service and social education and helping to increase the entrepreneurial and innovation awareness of the population, providing life-long learning, and conducting applied research and development activities in the fields taught."

The College's 2008-13 and 2014-18 Development Plans were provided with its Self-Evaluation Report. The two Plans share broad similarities, although some of the developments anticipated in the 2008-13 Plan do not appear to have materialised. The SER described how the Rector and the College's management team had led the processes that had enabled the completion of the College's 2014-18 Development Plan, and how responses to national and local plans and expectations had been incorporated into the planning process and the eventual Development Plan.

The College's 2014-18 Development Plan sets out a series of key targets for achievement over the planning period, such as to improve student retention for higher education programmes from 87 per cent to 80 per cent and for vocational programmes from 82 per cent to 85 per cent and to retain the level of employment for its graduates in professional positions at 72 per cent across the period. The Assessment committee was told that Estonian higher education faces a severe demographic challenge as the number of 18-25 year old students declines, so that what appear in the 2014-18 Development Plan as unambitious targets may simply be realistic assessments of how the College is likely to be able to respond to demographic circumstances and fierce competition for the best students from other higher education providers. Other targets in the 2014-18 Development Plan more related to staff achievements also envisage no growth, however, whether it is in research outputs, publications or in-service training.

During its visit to the College the Assessment committee discussed the College's planning processes with members of its management, including the use of action plans to track progress on individual developments. The Assessment committee noted that distance and flexible learning had been mentioned only briefly in the 2008-13 Development Plan and that notwithstanding the dominant part that it was playing in the delivery of the College's provision by 2013, distance learning was not mentioned at all in the 2014-18 Development Plan, in which there was only one oblique reference to flexible learning. Likewise, the 2014-18 Development Plan makes no reference to the contribution of internships and other forms of work-based learning to the College's approach to the delivery of the curriculum. The Assessment committee found these absences from the 2014-18 Development Plan surprising.

The Assessment committee **recommends** that the College considers carefully how to ensure that its development planning process, Development Plan, and follow-up action plans include key features of the way in which the College has chosen to deliver its higher education

provision (which are making a positive contribution to Estonia and to the development of the College itself) such as internships and distance learning.

The Self-Evaluation Report described the College's management structure and arrangements, and a helpful structure diagram was provided with the SER as part of the College's supplementary information to show how responsibilities had been assigned. The management and structures of the College are prescribed in its Statutes as adopted in 2009 and elaborated in conformity with the requirements of the Republic of Estonia Education Act. The College is led by its Rector who is supported by an Assistant and the College's Quality and Human Resources Manager, both based in the Rector's Office. The Rector is also supported by two Vice-Rectors: one of whom oversees Academic matters (see below) and the other Development matters which in this case include responsibility for overseeing the College's In-Service Training and Retraining Centre and the College's marketing and external communications. The top level of the College's management tier is completed by the Administrative and Finance Director.

The College delivers the curriculum through two academic departments: Entrepreneurship and Accounting, and Social Work. Between them these departments, which are referred to as "Chairs" by the College, employ 23 of the College's 24.8 academic staff; the Chairs are each led by a "Head of Chair". There are 13 staff in the Chair of Entrepreneurship and Accounting, including the Head, and 10 staff in Social work, again including the Head. In addition to the two Chairs there is a small specialist Academic Service department comprising the College's Head of Academic Services, its Academic Secretary, and its Educational Technologist. The Heads of Chairs are responsible for the delivery of each of the programmes their Chair provides and the line management of the relevant teaching staff, including their appraisal. The work of the Heads of Chairs is overseen by the Academic Vice-Rector.

During its visit the Assessment committee was able to meet the College's Administrative and Finance Director and its Safety Officer who was able to discuss **how the College manages its finances and its estates**. From these discussions the Assessment committee learned how the College managed its properties, including the Manor House at Mõdriku which is a historic building.

As required by its Statutes, the College has several deliberative bodies; these include the Council which is its "highest collegial decision-making body with academic and other responsibilities". The membership of the Council includes the Rector, who is its Chair; the Vice-Rectors; the Heads of Chairs; a lecturer from each Chair; and a student representative. The Statutes also require the College to establish and operate an Advisory Body to maintain strong links between the College and its stakeholders in Estonian society. In the course of several meetings during its visit, the Assessment committee was able to discuss the work of the Council with its members and to meet members of the College's Advisory Body. From its discussions with staff and student members of the Council the Assessment committee was able to confirm that the Council met at least four times each year to perform the range of functions the College's Statutes require of it. It was also told that there might also be more informal meetings of the Council.

In addition to the College Council, there is a Students' Council through which students are able to represent the views of their peers to the College authorities. Students who met the Assessment committee considered that representations by the Student Council provided an effective means to keep the College in touch with students' views.

Within the College, **internal communications** between staff are facilitated by its compactness and although the College only has one study centre a few kilometres away from the Mõdriku campus in Rakvere, the Assessment committee came to share the view expressed in the Self-Evaluation Report that internal communications are good and that the College is a cohesive community. Students who met the Assessment committee reported that the teaching staff were directly accessible for those studying at Mõdriku or Rakvere and that more important for them than the circulation of information by physical noticeboards in the College buildings or by post, was the provision of information through email and particularly through the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), MOODLE. This is of particular relevance to communications between students, staff and their peers when studying away from the College on the distance learning components of their programmes or during their internships. The Assessment committee was interested to learn that those who provide internships for the College's students have their own access to the College's VLE, with news, information and training materials for them as internship providers, and details of the College's regulations and procedures.

The College has itself acknowledged in its current Development Plan that it needs to improve its external communications with its stakeholders and particularly with school-age and other potential students, internship providers and employers. The College participates in external promotion events and information and recruitment fairs for students and there are plans to make use of social media, including Facebook and YouTube to promote awareness of the College and its specialisms. As the College and its Advisory Board recognise, it will need to intensify the marketing and external promotion and communications of the College as the number of available students in the 18-25 age range declines.

1.2 Personnel management	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:

The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development arise from the objectives of the development plan of a higher education institution, and ensure academic sustainability.

When selecting, appointing and evaluating members of the academic staff, their past activities (teaching, RDC, student feedback, etc.) are taken into account in a balanced way.

The principles of remuneration and motivation of employees are clearly defined, available to all employees, and implemented.

Employee satisfaction with the management, working conditions, flow of information, etc., is regularly surveyed and the results used in improvement activities.

Employees participate in international mobility programmes, cooperation projects, networks, etc.

Employees base their activities on principles of academic ethics.

Lääne-Viru College has defined its **objectives for Human Resource Management** as to ensure that the "College staff is professionally competent, cooperative, results-oriented and role models for the students." Its Self-Evaluation Report adds that "Development of employees supports their welfare, competitiveness and performance." When she met the Assessment committee, the Rector was keen to stress the importance the College of maintaining its investment in staff development.

As noted in Section 1.1, the College has a small body of full-time staff, which on 1 January 2014 consisted of 66 employees. Among its academic staff, two have qualifications at PhD level and 80 per cent of the academic staff hold qualifications at Masters level. The average age of the academic staff is stated in the Self-Evaluation Report as 45.2 years and the average age of members of the support and administrative staff as 51.3. Among the academic staff, more than 65 per cent are over 50. The College employs some 35 visiting lecturers, some of whom have been essential to the development of new areas of provision such as software engineering and development. Visiting lecturers are brought into College activities insofar as their other commitments allow and they can participate in the staff development activities the College offers on the same basis as full-time members of the academic staff. This is **commended** as good practice.

Turnover among the full-time academic staff is low. The College has the same **recruitment, interview and appointment** procedures for visiting and full-time lecturers for whom the procedures are employed more frequently. The Assessment committee was told that the College's recruitment interview and appointment procedures conform in all respects to the requirements of the law and the College Statutes. Decisions on whether to create new posts are made on the basis of the priorities expressed in the College's Development Plan. The College's appointment procedures involve public advertisement of the post to be filled and interviews conducted by the relevant Head of Chair. When filling posts the College may also draw the attention of present or former visiting lecturers to the vacancy where their qualifications fit the job specification and for whom the College has previously received good student feedback. The College may also approach alumni in particular cases.

A commitment to the **support and development** of all its staff is a feature of the College's Human Resources arrangements. In its 2014-18 Development Plan the College defines its priorities for staff development by 2018 as follows:

- to raise the proportion of the academic and support staff that is competent in English;
- to ensure that at least 12 members of staff attend international conferences each year;

- to raise the already high level of staff satisfaction with the training they receive;
- to provide more time for staff to undertake doctoral study and increase the number of staff with PhDs;
- to increase student satisfaction with the IT skills of their lecturers;
- to support staff to refresh their professional experience through time with local, national and international employers;
- to increase participation in staff development and training among visiting lecturers, and
- to establish a mentoring scheme for new staff.

The Assessment committee noted that the above priorities arise clearly from the developmental needs identified by the College in the SWOT analysis that it completed as part of its preparations for the Development Plan (but see also Section 1.1, above).

All members of the academic staff participate in annual development interviews. This **appraisal system** enables the Head of Chair to assess their individual development needs and plan with the individual how to meet them. The Assessment committee met members of the teaching staff to discuss with them (among other matters) how they had experienced the College's staff development arrangements. Staff confirmed that the annual development interviews took place and that the College operates a substantial programme of professional training, with the possibility of two weeks of in-service training for staff of all disciplines. Staff also confirmed to the Assessment committee that the time set aside for training, courses and research, following the annual development interviews was provided by the College.

The Assessment committee learned that a large variety of development activities of staff is made available and supported by the College, and that its staff are encouraged to develop and improve themselves. The Assessment committee also considers that the College's decision to invest in developing the capacities of its visiting lecturers, who teach on a part-time basis, continued to be worthwhile, was appreciated by them and was of benefit to the students. The Assessment committee came to the view that the College is to be **commended** for its careful attention to staff development.

The Assessment committee was not satisfied that the College is setting sufficiently demanding targets for itself. The academic staff members are already active and seem likely to find the targets in the 2014-18 Development Plan easy to meet. These include, for example, to increase student satisfaction with lecturers' IT skills on a five point scale, from 3.35, to 3.5 and ensure that 10 per cent of the academic staff hold a PhD; that is, to increase from two staff with PhDs to three.

The College has defined its principles of **remuneration** and benefits in its "Remuneration Regulations" which are generally available and which it publishes on its Intranet. Salary levels are defined in the light of the prior experience of the appointee or post holder and the responsibilities and demands associated with the role to which staff have been appointed or promoted. The College has a system for calculating individual workloads for academic staff that it shared with the Assessment committee during the visit, and which helps it to balance the demands it places

on staff in a fair manner.

There is a competitive process for Staff who are promoted internally, for example to be the "leading lecturer" for a work area or discipline, and who achieve their promotion through a formal process of application and interview. Leading lecturers receive a substantial allowance of time (300 hours per annum) in which to undertake the role.

The College has systematically implemented **employee satisfaction surveys** which have been distributed to all staff and the results analysed on several occasions. These have confirmed that academic staff are satisfied with their remuneration, how their workload is determined and shared overall; the recognition they receive from the College for their contributions and the conditions in which they work. This was confirmed when members of the academic staff met the Assessment committee, which came to the view that the College's approach to the remuneration of its staff is based on clear principles that are implemented in a way that contributes positively to staff motivation.

The Self-Evaluation Report stated that since 2009 the College had increased its investment in the internationalization of its activities. The College encourages each subject area to participate in cooperation projects so that each programme has international contacts. Again, since 2009 a high proportion of the full-time permanent teaching staff has participated in **international mobility programmes**. Additional supporting information supplied by the College showed that it had successfully used Erasmus, Nordplus, Leonardo da Vinci, Eurashment, Interreg and Primus funding processes to support the growing internationalization of the College and its work and to enable visits from international guest lecturers. The Assessment committee came to the view that the College is to be **commended** for the systematic way it has invested in internationalization of its staff and that those staff who have participated in international mobility schemes bring back good practice and ideas for new developments that are benefiting the College.

In the course of the Accreditation review the Assessment committee took care to establish how the College ensures that its staff base their activities on principles of **academic ethics**. It noted that the College has established an Ethics Committee and has established "Procedures of Managing Academic Fraud and Inappropriate Behaviour in Lääne-Viru College" to define academic malpractice and fraud and how it will be treated. To promote and support ethical conduct by students who are preparing their final year undergraduate theses the College has set out good practice in supervision. In general the Assessment committee came to the view that the College strives to ensure that its teaching, learning and research and consultancy activities are performed in accordance with the precepts of academic ethics.

1.3 Management of financial resources and infrastructure	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
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Requirements:

The allocation of financial resources of a higher education institution as well as the administration and development of infrastructure are economically feasible, and are based on the objectives of the development plan of an institution of higher education and national priorities (except private institutions).

A higher education institution uses information systems that support its management and the coherent performance of its core processes.

The working conditions of the staff, and the learning and RDC conditions of students (library, studios, workshops, laboratories, etc.) meet the needs arising from the specifics of an institution of higher education and the expectations of members.

The Self-Evaluation Report stated that Lääne-Viru College distributes its funds as required by its Statutes and by the legal framework within which it operates. The College provided its latest Financial Strategy as part of the supplementary information that accompanied the SER and described the basis on which the budget is drawn up and revenue is expended. External financial audits between 2009 and 2012 and by the National Audit Office of Estonia in 2013 have shown that the College is organizing its finances as required by external laws and regulations and its own Statutes.

The Assessment committee was told that the funds that the College received required detailed and careful management and that it actively followed up opportunities to apply for external funding from the Estonian State, local authorities and the European Union. For example, in addition to environmental improvements the College had recently undertaken a project to establish a training facility for student care workers which had benefited from funding under the EU "ARCHIMEDES" programme. Other College facilities and programmes had received support from EU and State funding, including funds for reducing CO₂ emissions and for the support of a programme of therapeutic training for senior citizens being offered by the College's In-Service Training and Retraining Centre. The College receives some funds through the consultancy activities it undertakes, and members of staff who undertake consultancy work in order to maintain the currency of their professional skills are expected to pay a portion of the fees so earned to the College, to compensate it for their use of its research and other facilities. Staff who engage in consultancy are permitted by the College to retain the larger part of the fee to encourage them to undertake consultancy work which also benefits the College and its students. Overall, the Assessment committee was satisfied that the College distributed its revenues in line with its needs and the duties laid on it by law and its own Statutes.

The Assessment committee noted with interest that under Estonian regulations it was possible for a higher education student to follow a full-time programme through distance learning and for the student and the institution providing their tuition, assessment, and learning support to be funded on the same basis as for other full-time students. The educational aspects of the College's use of a combination of distance learning with intensive periods of face-to-face tuition (referred to throughout this report as "blended learning") is discussed elsewhere in this report (see

Section 2). Members of the College who spoke to the Assessment committee about the financial consequences of its adoption of a "blended learning" mode of providing higher education programmes in its specialisms told it that it was not easy to work out whether the College had benefited financially from adopting this mode of teaching and learning, but that it had enabled the College to recruit higher education students to its specialist programmes from across Estonia who might not otherwise have been willing to travel to Rakvere or Mõdriku and this had definitely benefited the College.

The Assessment committee congratulates the College on the way that it has used "blended learning" approaches to higher education to increase its attractiveness to higher education students studying applied accountancy and other specialist subjects with it and would have welcomed the opportunity to read in the College's Development Plan, how the College intended to sustain and further develop its present support for "blended learning" and the associated staff development.

The Self-Evaluation Report described how the College uses **management information systems**. The College uses a Student Admissions Information System (SAIS) to support student entry, as do other institutions in Estonia, and it uses a Study Information System (SIS) to track and monitor student information. It has also installed document and content management systems to manage the content and publication of information in on-line documents and the College website. This is forward-looking and good practice, in that it supports consistency in the publication of information to students via MOODLE and the College intranet, and to the wider public through the College's website. The Self-Evaluation Report stated that College uses the TMS feedback monitoring system to benchmark its performance against other higher education institutions in Estonia. The Assessment committee **commends** the College on its adoption of content and document management systems, its development of MOODLE to meet its educational purposes, and its readiness to use information systems in its internal management.

The Assessment committee discussed with members of the College how it managed its **buildings and facilities** to ensure that they met its educational and other objectives and how it checked that staff and students are satisfied with the learning environment that the College provides. The Assessment committee noted that the College collects feedback from students and staff on the learning environment provided at Mõdriku and Rakvere and (through MOODLE) to distance and blended learning students. Students and members of staff who met the Assessment committee confirmed that their views were sought about the study and work environment the College provides and students were able to point to changes that had been made to their study environment in response to feedback they had provided (see also 1.2 above).

2 TEACHING AND LEARNING

General comments:

The College has defined its educational objectives in its Development Plan. It measures the extent to which it has met its objectives through annual reviews and Action Plans. It derives its confidence in its academic and programme quality standards from their acceptance by official and professional bodies following external evaluations. Consultations with employers, alumni and stakeholders, including through the College's Curriculum Councils, enable it to identify needs and opportunities for new study programmes.

The College is to be commended for its effective use of the Curriculum Councils to develop new programmes and monitor the relevance of the content of current programmes to the needs of employers and society.

The College's admissions arrangements provide for students to apply for admission to its higher education programmes through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The College has recently revised its admission arrangements but these may require further work (see below).

The Assessment committee **recommends** that the College ensures that its admissions procedures for applicants to enter through RPL are detailed, clearly stated, and rigorously applied, and that all students applying to enter through RPL with advanced standing (including those applying to enter to study by distance and/or blended learning) should be interviewed and their applications assessed on the same basis as other applicants.

The Assessment committee also **recommends** that the College should revise its procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning to express them more clearly, making clear that they are academic assessment procedures in which judgements are required by academic staff in case by case considerations of individual applications.

The Assessment committee **recommends** that the College should set out directions to staff on how they are to make and record the necessary academic judgements about the prior learning of the applicant and the learning outcomes achieved, and how to describe and record any deficits in learning or achievement that will need to be remedied as a condition of admission to study on a named programme.

The Assessment committee further **recommends** that the College should set out, as a separate section of its revised RPL procedures, how judgements are to be made by academic staff about the admission of students through RPL with advanced standing into the second or later years of degree programmes, and the stringent criteria that are to be applied by those making the judgements to ensure that students are only admitted to the final year of degree programmes through RPL who can demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes at Level 6 of the

Estonian Qualifications Framework, whether through prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning.

The College states that it will accept students with disabilities who apply to enter. The Assessment committee also **recommends** that the College should investigate how it might help its teaching staff to be aware of the signs that students have dyslexia or dyscalculia and how it might support students so identified to be successful in their studies.

The College monitors the progress of its students through their studies and intends to improve the tutorial support for its first year students. The College's present monitoring arrangements do not capture sufficiently detailed and timely information for it to be able to identify individuals or groups at risk of not engaging with their studies and not making progress sufficiently promptly that there is the possibility to intervene to support them. The non-completion rate for higher education students at the College is 20 per cent and for vocational students it is nearly 30 per cent.

The Assessment committee **recommends** that the College should consider enhancing its admission arrangements to enable it to identify applicants who are non-native speakers who might need additional support with Estonian language skills in order to succeed, and students considering studying by distance learning/blended learning who might need mentoring or other additional support to enable them to make a successful transition to this mode of study on a higher education programme at Level 6. The Assessment committee also suggests that the College should consider monitoring how individual students studying by distance learning/blended learning use the MOODLE VLE and their attendance at face-to-face sessions at Mõdriku, in order to provide better and more timely information on their progress.

The College offers modules in its vocational programmes and its higher education programmes with similar titles and closely similar learning outcomes and, in some cases, vocational and higher education students are taught together. The College assesses vocational students and higher education students using different marking scales. For higher education students the College uses a six point marking scale as required in the relevant Estonian legislation.

The College has a well-developed Virtual Learning Environment based on the MOODLE platform and uses modern information and communication technologies confidently in support of teaching and learning and its internal management.

The Assessment committee **commends** the College for its use of modern technical and educational technology to support learning and teaching.

The Assessment committee also **commends** the College for its development of internship teaching and its mobilisation of the "connective" model of internship.

The Assessment committee considers that in Teaching and Learning the College partially conforms to requirements.

2.1 Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body	conforms to requirements		partially conforms to requirements	X	does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:
*A higher education institution has defined its educational objectives and measures their implementation.
 A higher education institution educates students so they are nationally and internationally competitive.
 The number of student places is planned in accordance with the social need and the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education.
 The admission rules are consistent with the mission and purposes of an institution of higher education and support the formation of a motivated student body.
 Students are provided with opportunities to study at a higher education institution regardless of any special needs.*

Lääne-Viru College's 2014 Development Plan sets out the **educational objectives** of the College and confirms that they have been drawn up by the College in conformity with Estonian legislation and having consulted a wide range of relevant Estonian planning and strategy documents that were listed in the Self-Evaluation Report. The English translation of its 2014-18 Development Plan states the College's educational objectives as follows:

"The objectives of the learning activities are a continuous and sustainable curriculum development considerate of the interested parties using the best practices, including international best practices. The study organisation is flexible and learner-centred. The graduates are competitive in the labour market and they have the prerequisites for lifelong learning."

Among the detailed educational objectives of the College as defined in the 2014 Development Plan are:

- to develop student counselling services and support for first year students and to develop the effectiveness of the Student Board;
- to improve student retention and completion;
- to develop curricula that "are in compliance with the needs of real work life and are sustainable";
- to generalise the "connective practice model" [of internships] across the curriculum; and

- to use "innovative technological solutions" to create "e-course", "e-objects" and lecture recordings.

The Assessment committee is confident that the College is committed to develop modes of study that are learner-centred and flexible, and that it is committed to identifying and adopting good practice from elsewhere if it will improve its curriculum, modes of learning and teaching, and its support for learning and teaching. The Assessment committee is likewise satisfied that the College has defined its educational objectives and targets and that it measures its performance against the targets it has previously set in its Development Plan and annual Action Plans. The Assessment committee **commends** the College for its application of the "connective practice" model of internship.

The College's provision of learning, teaching and its assessment of the achievements of its students is regulated by its Curriculum Statutes, which were last modified in 2013. Together with the Study Regulations they comprise the College's academic regulations; these are available to staff and students through the College's intranet.

The College's 2014 Development Plan states that its higher education programmes [curricula] have been evaluated externally by EKKA, that they have been found to meet national and international requirements and that an external evaluation in 2010-11 (again carried out by EKKA) had granted its programmes approval for indefinite period. During the site visit to the College, members of staff told the Assessment committee that these external evaluations gave them confidence that the College was applying the correct academic standards to measure the achievements of its students as had comparisons with similar programmes offered by other institutions elsewhere in Europe.

Other external evaluations, including those of the College's vocational programmes by professional associations, were cited by members of staff to the Assessment committee as further evidence of the international comparability of its programmes, as was the employability of its students and the acceptance of its graduates onto postgraduate programmes by other higher education institutions in Estonia and further afield. The College has also compared its programmes with like programmes offered by institutions in Finland and Lithuania. The Self-Evaluation Report observed that the competitiveness of the College's students in a challenging employment market is advanced by the internship model that the College has adopted, which enables students and graduates to offer a mix of academic and practical attributes and skills to a prospective employer.

Members of the College described to the Assessment committee **how new programmes were developed**. The identification of needs and opportunities for new programmes chiefly appeared to involve the assessment of information from employers and other stakeholders in many cases gathered through the College's Curriculum Councils.

The Assessment committee is confident that the College's higher education programmes have been systematically developed and externally evaluated through participatory processes during the last five years and that they have been accredited as meeting international expectations. The Assessment committee makes recommendations elsewhere in this report about the way that the College expresses the learning outcomes it

associates with modules, courses and programmes and how it designs programmes.

The College **plans the number of student places** it offers on the basis of its goals, staff and facilities; on the official rules that apply for the enrolment of full time students in state-commissioned education; and on its assessment of the needs of the labour market. The final decision regarding the number of study places to be made available at the College is made by the College Council. Information in the Self-Evaluation Report showed that the number of higher education students studying at the College via state-funded places has significantly increased to 75 per cent of all students.

The College monitors and analyses the provision of state-commissioned education regularly and the results of its analysis are taken into account when planning new admissions.

Members of the College told the Assessment committee that it updates its **admissions** criteria regularly to ensure that it complies with State regulations and legislation. Shortly before the Assessment committee visited Lääne-Viru College it learned that the Ministry of Education and Research had queried with the College, among other things, its use of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to admit a substantial number of students with advanced standing, to the later stages of higher education degree programmes. The Ministry's concern appeared to be that students who had successfully completed vocational programmes located at Level 4 of the Estonian Qualifications Framework were being enabled to enter the later stages of higher education programmes all of which should be located at Level 6 on the Framework.

The College told the Assessment committee that while it contested the Ministry's findings it was planning to enrol smaller numbers of more highly qualified students via RPL in future, and that the repositioning of some of the relevant vocational programmes to Level 5 on the Estonian Qualifications Framework would help to clarify the situation. The College had also updated its criteria for deciding whether to admit a student to a higher education programme, which had previously been on the basis of the average grade that the student has achieved in the secondary school certificate. Following the queries by the Ministry of Education and Research, the College has revised its admission procedures to require candidates for admission to attend for an interview and for the report from the interview to be considered as part of the evaluation of the student's application. The College's use of RPL has considerable bearing on the College's admissions policies and procedures and the number of students it admits: this matter is discussed further in Section 2.3 of this report.

The additional information provided during the site visit demonstrated that the College had recently taken steps to develop its admission procedures. For students applying to study by distance or "blended" learning the Assessment committee was told that College will require, in addition to their results from previous study, written evidence of the applicant's motivation to study and that they have already acquired research skills. The College is satisfied that the number of applications it receives for its available places (five applicants per place in 2012) will continue to enable it to recruit only students with higher grades than the minimum.

The Assessment committee observes that by enabling well motivated students who have been successful in vocational studies to progress to a higher education degree the College is providing a valuable opportunity to former vocational students at the College and other Colleges in Estonia offering vocational programmes. The advantages to the individuals concerned are obvious, in that having completed their vocational programmes in two years of study at Level 4, entry to the later years of a higher education degree programme at Level 6 through Recognition of Prior Learning enables them, if successful, graduate with a degree. Because this is such a potentially advantageous arrangement for these individuals, the Assessment committee **recommends** that the College ensures that its admissions procedures for applicants to enter through RPL are detailed, clearly stated, and rigorously applied, and that all students applying to enter through RPL with advanced standing (including those applying to enter to study by distance and/or blended learning) should be interviewed and their applications assessed on the same basis as other students. As noted above, comments on the College's RPL procedures can be found elsewhere in this report (see below, 2.3).

The Self-Evaluation Report stated that the College accepted applications to study from students with special needs, that it provided support arrangements for such students including counselling, and that it had adapted its physical environment where this was possible. An English translation of the College's admission rules provided with the SER stated, however, that "All the citizens and residents of the Estonian Republic having secondary education and being healthy enough to study can apply to the College". The Assessment committee queried this statement with the College which subsequently informed it that the version of the admission regulations that had been provided with the SER had been from an earlier period, and that this statement had been removed from its 2014 admission regulations.

The Assessment committee discussed with staff how the College supported students with other disabilities such as dyslexia or dyscalculia. It appeared to the Assessment committee that these were matters that the College had not fully considered and it **recommends** that the College should investigate how it might help its teaching staff to be aware of the signs that students have dyslexia or dyscalculia and how it might support students so identified to be successful in their studies.

2.2 Study programme development	conforms to requirements		partially conforms to requirements	X	does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:
*A higher education institution bases its new study programmes on its purposes and the needs of the labour market, and takes into account the strategies of the country and expectations of the society.
 Development activities related to study programmes are systematic and regular, and different stakeholders are involved in the development of study programmes.
 Graduate satisfaction with the quality of instruction and employer satisfaction with the quality and suitability to the requirements of the labour market of graduates are surveyed and analysed; the results are considered in the development of study programmes.*

The College's Self-Evaluation Report states that it regards **curriculum development and the development of new study programmes** as a continuing process and that it reviews the curriculum and individual programmes annually, as part of its review of the Action Plans that are linked to the College's Development Plan and the Action Plans of the Heads of Chairs. Ideas for new programmes of study may originate with the "Curriculum Councils" that the Chairs convene for their respective areas of work or direct from local or national initiatives, as is the case with State-commissioned vocational education.

The College's various Curriculum Councils involve external stakeholders including employers and representatives of local and State authorities and agencies. College staff who are members of the Curriculum Councils and external members who met the Assessment committee were able to confirm that the views of employers and others are sought on future curriculum developments, on the content of current programmes, and on the relevance of what internship students have previously learned with the College to the "real world" tasks they are asked to undertake when in the workplace. Alumni and employers who met the Assessment committee were able to confirm that the studies they had followed while at the College helped to ensure the employability of the College's graduates.

The Self-Evaluation Report cited the College's recently introduced "Business Information Systems Management" programme as an example of a programme that had been developed from the College's **analysis of the employment market and feedback from employers and other stakeholders**. Other examples included in higher education an "Administrative Assistant" programme and in the College's portfolio of vocational programmes "Software Development". The SER stated that the College conducted regular market research with its alumni and employers, directed by the Heads of Chairs, to identify openings for new programmes and also for research and consultancy.

At the time of its visit the Assessment committee was unable to identify a handbook or guidance for academic staff on the principles of curriculum design among the College's supporting documents for the review or where staff might turn to for advice on how to use the Level Descriptors in the Estonian Qualifications Framework to design learning outcomes matched to Level 6 on the Framework, and the associated assessment tasks to show achievement of the learning outcomes. The College subsequently represented to the Assessment committee that it provided staff with a "Handbook of Curriculum Development" and guidance documents on "Study Methods in a Higher Education Institution", and "Learning Outcomes Based Assessment Methods in a Higher Education Institution". These documents were also said to be available digitally.

The Assessment committee considered a number of programme documents and module outlines and their associated learning outcomes. It found that where there were vocational modules and higher education modules with the same titles, they appeared to have identical learning outcomes. The Assessment committee also learned that some higher education and vocational programmes with the same titles were taught together, with vocational and higher education students in the same class.

Members of the College told the Assessment committee that the occasions on which vocational and higher education students were taught together were few and that they tended to involve those parts of disciplines and subjects where both vocational and higher education students needed to master basic elements. Staff also told the Assessment committee that assessment tasks completed by higher education students were marked using a six point scale rather than the five point scale used for vocational students and that the College expected more independent study from higher education students than from its vocational students.

In the time available to it the Assessment committee was unable to come to a definitive conclusion about how effectively the College differentiates the learning outcomes for higher education modules and vocational modules where there are vocational and higher education programmes with similar or the same titles. Nonetheless, the evidence available to it persuades the Assessment committee to **recommend** to the College that it should revisit the way that it states the learning outcomes for its vocational programmes and for its higher education programmes, to ensure that the way that the learning outcomes are set out for modules in vocational and in higher education programmes are distinctive and in each case that they are consistent with the relevant Level Descriptors in the Estonian Qualification Framework and the requirements of Government Regulation 178 "Standard of Higher Education". (See also below, 2.3)

2.3 Student academic progress and student assessment	conforms to requirements		partially conforms to requirements	x	does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:
Student academic progress is monitored and supported.
Student assessment supports learning and is in line with learning outcomes.
A higher education institution has an effective system for taking account of prior learning and work experience.

The Self-Evaluation Report stated that the College's Academic Services monitors **student progress and completion** at two points in the session: August 31 and January 31. The data on student progress and completion that were provided in the SER showed that non-completion for higher education students (referred to by the College as "dropout") had been fairly constant at about 15 per cent, in previous years but had more recently increased to 20 per cent, which is near to the national average for similar programmes. For vocational students the non-completion rate, at 27.8 per cent in 2012-13, is higher than the national average for comparable programmes.

The Assessment committee noted that the College has sought to understand why a fifth of its higher education students and almost a third of its vocational students do not complete their studies. It stated in the Self-Evaluation Report that about half of the students who do not progress or complete their studies are unable to achieve at the level the College requires and that the other 10 per cent of higher education students who

do not progress or complete their studies leave because of personal reasons or because their employer is not willing to release them for an internship or study. The SER also stated, however, that a "large proportion of drop-outs is among the non-native speakers of Estonian, as it is difficult for them to comprehend the professional terminology".

It appeared to the Assessment committee that the College's present monitoring arrangements for student progress do not capture sufficiently detailed and timely information for it to be able to identify individuals or groups at risk of not engaging with their studies and not making progress sufficiently promptly to be able to intervene to support them. In its Development Plan the College proposes to enhance the tutorial support it gives to first year students and to introduce a mentoring system for first year students. This is a development that needs to be introduced as a matter of urgency. At the same time, the Assessment committee **recommends** that the College should consider enhancing its admission arrangements to enable it to identify applicants who are non-native speakers and might need additional support with Estonian language skills in order to succeed, and students considering studying by distance learning/blended learning who might need mentoring or other additional support to enable them to make a successful transition to this mode of study on a higher education programme at Level 6. For students who have been admitted to the College the Assessment committee suggests that in addition to the support and mentoring measures it proposes in its Development Plan the College should also consider what measures it might introduce to track student attendance for face-to-face tuition and student use of the MOODLE VLE to help it identify students who are not engaging with their studies.

The College's Study Regulations were provided in one of the supplementary documents that were submitted with the Self-Evaluation Report. As noted earlier, the College grades the assessments of professional higher education students using a six point scale. Students who met the Assessment committee confirmed that they were provided with statements of the assessment methods and requirements for each module in the descriptions that were issued when they commenced the module.

The Self-Evaluation Report provided a link to the College's 2013 procedure for the **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**, which has since been revised, as noted above. The 2014 document which contains the procedure states that the quality of RPL is assured by transparent, clear, fair and consistent assessment criteria and procedures; clear and available information is given, describing the tasks involved clearly; helping the applicants and reviewing the procedure once a year. The College's 2014 RPL procedures describe an online submission/application process for applicants to use in describing their prior learning and work experience. The description for the 2014 RPL procedures states the administrative procedures for RPL but not how the committee that undertakes the assessment applies the academic judgement of its members to assess how the evidence of prior learning that is supplied by the applicant is matched to specific learning outcomes. Further, the College's current RPL procedure does not describe how decisions are made about the admission of students with advanced standing: that is, to join the second or third year of the College's degree programmes.

Applications from existing vocational students to the College to be considered with the Recognition of Prior Learning are made through the

Study Information System (SIS) online. The College also provides training in "self-analysis" for those of its students who wish to submit their prior and experiential learning for recognition through SIS. The College informed the Assessment committee that information about the self-analysis training was publicly available on the College website and that the training was available to the college students as well as all the applicants for entry. The College also informed the Assessment committee that applicants for entry through RPL who are not current students at the College are not able to record their prior learning via SIS.

All applicants for admission to the College through Recognition of Prior Learning are required to provide proof of qualifications already earned and other documentary support. The Assessment committee noted that the College approved more than 90 per cent of the applications it received from those seeking to enter its degree programmes through RPL.

The Assessment committee discussed admission through the Recognition of Prior Learning with staff, students and alumni during its visit. It learned that more than 100 students had been admitted to study on the third year of degree programmes in Business, where a high proportion of studies were via distance-learning/blended learning. The Assessment committee also learned that the way the College had operated the immediate predecessor of its 2014 RPL procedure had meant that, in some cases, the College had been unable to identify where students might have had gaps in detailed factual and higher knowledge that would need to be remedied if they were to progress satisfactorily. In other instances, however, the College had been able to identify such deficiencies and in such cases the students had been required to undertake additional study and assessments.

It seemed to the Assessment committee that Lääne-Viru College admits a substantial number of its own former vocational students who have been successful in their assessments to its higher education programmes through Recognition of Prior Learning, but that it also provides a progression route for successful former vocational students from other Colleges that provide vocational studies. The College provided the Assessment committee with additional information on the RPL procedures that it followed in such cases; these involve mapping and comparing the learning outcomes and the content of the programmes offered by the other institutions. From the information it received it was not clear to the Assessment committee whether the mappings that the College performed were against the learning outcomes of its own vocational programmes or the learning outcomes of its own higher education programmes. The Assessment committee was informed by the College that each application for admission through RPL was assessed individually. In the time available to it the Assessment committee was not able to confirm this.

Having reviewed the College's procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning and considered the supplementary information provided by the College and by students and staff, the Assessment committee **recommends** that the College should revise its procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning to express them more clearly, making clear that they are academic assessment procedures in which judgements are required by academic staff in case by case considerations of individual applications. As part of this exercise, the Assessment committee also **recommends** that the College should set out directions to staff on how they are to make and record the necessary academic judgements about the prior

learning of the applicant and the learning outcomes achieved, and how to describe and record any deficits in learning or achievement that will need to be remedied as a condition of admission to study on a named programme.

The Assessment committee further **recommends** that the College should set out, as a separate section of its revised RPL procedures, how judgements are to be made by academic staff about the admission of students through RPL with advanced standing into the second or the final years of degree programmes, and the stringent criteria that are to be applied by those making the judgements to ensure that students are only admitted to the final year of degree programmes through RPL who can demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes at Level 6 of the Estonian Qualifications Framework, whether through prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning.

2.4 Support processes for learning	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:
The organisation of studies creates an opportunity for students to complete their studies within the standard period.
A higher education institution provides students with counselling related to their studies and career.
A higher education institution supports student international mobility.
Modern technical and educational technology resources are used to organise educational activities.
Students are periodically asked for feedback on learning and support processes (the organisation of studies, assessment, counselling, etc.); the results of surveys are taken into account in improvement activities.

From the information available to the Assessment committee it believes that Lääne-Viru College has organised the pattern of studies for its students in such a way that it is possible for them to complete their studies within the standard period prescribed by regulations. The College provides students in advance with the academic calendar for the session and with study timetables. The timetables are also provided in the Study Information System (SIS). The information available to the Assessment committee shows that students studying full-time via distance learning/blended learning, with six intensive week-long study periods at Mõdriku, are expected to undertake the same volume of learning, tuition and assessment that is undertaken by their peers (and comparators) studying full-time and face-to-face at Mõdriku. The SER stated that through SIS, group supervisors and leading lecturers [are able] to monitor the performance of a learner in fulfilling the curriculum as well as achieving the learning outcomes".

The Assessment committee accepts the College's statements but **recommends** (as noted above, 2.3) that the College should consider how it could provide better and more timely information on the progress of such students, for example, through monitoring how individual students

studying by distance learning/blended learning use the MOODLE VLE and their attendance at face-to-face sessions at Mõdriku.

The College's Self-Evaluation Report noted that **counselling services to support academic progress and career advancement** are available for all students. Heads of Chairs, leading lecturers and other staff are expected to advise students on their progress and career options on an ad hoc basis, facilitated by the College's practice of requiring all full-time teaching staff to make available two hours per week to students at stated times that are published on the Study Information System and on notice boards.

The College's 2014 Development Plan has identified the need by 2018 to provide a more developed form of student support for first year students and to make improvements to the College's counselling service. The Assessment committee supports these moves, suggests that they should be made an immediate priority and that at the same time the College should consider support for its distance learning/blended learning students as already recommended.

The College regards the employment rates of its higher education graduates as satisfactory, with 72 per cent employed in a graduate-level post, although the Assessment committee also noted that many of those who register to study for a higher education qualification with the College (and particularly those who study via distance learning/blended learning) are already in employment when they register.

Employers and internship providers can and do advertise internship and job vacancies through the College's MOODLE VLE. This did not convince the Assessment committee that the College had fully considered what attention it might need to providing career counselling support and guidance for those of its students not already employed. The Assessment committee urges the College to give this matter its attention.

The College's Self-Evaluation Report showed that although it has concluded eight bilateral cooperation arrangements with higher education institutions outside Estonia (including in France and the UK) only 14 of its higher education students had participated in international exchanges during the last year, a level of engagement that the College's 2014 Development Plan does not envisage will change between now and 2018. The Assessment committee learned that at present the College does not provide financial assistance for outgoing students participating in international mobility schemes. If the College wishes to encourage more of its students to participate in international mobility schemes, the Assessment committee suggests that it may have to consider whether financial support (grants or bursaries) might make participation more attractive to students.

As noted elsewhere in this report, a high proportion of the College's higher education students follow their programmes through distance/blended learning; many such students are also in employment and are therefore likely to find it difficult to participate in **international mobility programmes**. The Assessment committee is also aware that about 12 per cent of the College's higher education students join it after the first year of their degree programme or in the final year which further reduces the number of its higher education students who might be willing to participate in

international mobility programmes.

The College's Self-Evaluation Report provided some details about its long-term **investment in modern technical and educational technology** to support learning teaching research and development. The information provided by the College showed that over an extended period it has undertaken a well-judged programme of investment in its information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure. This has enabled the College to deploy and use its MOODLE Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to support learning and teaching at the College and distance/blended learning. From the information in the SER, the adoption of MOODLE and the population of the VLE with learning materials have been undertaken over a sustained period, with decisions having been made and carried out as early as 2005 to train staff to produce learning and teaching materials and customise and localise the MOODLE VLE for the College's purposes.

The Self-Evaluation Report noted that the College is continuing to develop its MOODLE VLE and has identified funding for a "digilab" to support training activities in the College's specialist areas of interest. It has also invested in video technologies, including video conferencing and video recording equipment. The focus of these technologies is on providing platforms and real or virtual spaces for learning. The SER also referred to the College's arrangements to familiarise students with the specialist software used in the human resources, accounting and record keeping of enterprises and the software used in particular employment sectors such as social work, software development and retailing.

The College is to be **commended** for its long-term support for the development of its MOODLE Virtual learning Environment and, more generally, for its use of modern technical and educational technology to support learning and teaching.

The College's arrangements to gather and analyse **feedback on its learning and teaching arrangements** were described in the Self-Evaluation Report, which provided a link to the College's "Procedure of Collecting Feedback and Indicators at Lääne-Viru College". This describes a wide range of sources of feedback that the College gathers and the indicators that it uses in its learning, teaching and management processes. The SER stated that this feedback information is taken into consideration when designing the Development plan and annual Action Plan and to provide an overall view of the effectiveness of the College's learning and teaching arrangements and its overall progress. The SER also stated that since 2008 the College's feedback monitoring system (TMS) has enabled it to compare its own feedback with that collected by other institutions of professional higher education.

The Assessment committee is confident that the College systematically gathers feedback from its students and responds where appropriate by making changes to its provision and learning environment and the way it delivers the curriculum. Students and employers also told the Assessment committee that the College sought feedback on the currency and relevance of what students were learning through the Curriculum Councils and the providers of placements and internships and from the Student Council. The Assessment committee commends the College for its energy in gathering and using feedback to date. As the College continues to develop its arrangements to gather and analyse the feedback it collects from students and other stakeholders on the teaching and learning support it provides, it may wish to consider how, in addition to the data it gathers it

might gather analyse and present information taken from qualitative feedback by students and others.

3 RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND/OR OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITY (RDC)

General comments:

Lääne-Viru College has defined its RDC objectives and measures their implementation but the Assessment committee finds the College's identification of curriculum development as an applied research activity problematic, in that it does not help the College to form a realistic assessment of its achievements in RDC in its subject specialisms or to set challenging targets for RDC and particularly applied research related to its subject specialisms.

The Assessment committee **recommends** that the College should adopt a more demanding approach to defining and setting targets for applied research and development in its specialism outside curriculum development. The Assessment committee also **recommends** that the College should adopt more systematic approach to the management of its research and development activities.

The College monitors the needs of society and the labour market, and considers them in planning its curriculum development and its RDC activities. This double counting is facilitated by the identification of curriculum development as a form of applied research.

The College has limited financial resources to devote to the support of its RDC activities, but by taking advantage of funding made available by the Estonian State and the EU for projects the College has been able to find funds to invest in RDC activities. It also appears to have pursued a long-term strategy to invest in digital media and services to the benefit of teaching and learning and RDC although this may be adventitious as the College's Development Strategy 2008-14 and its equivalent for 2014-18 make no mention of this.

The Assessment committee **recommends** that the College should appoint staff with PhD qualifications in subjects linked to its specialisms, who are themselves currently active researchers, to lead the development of research activity within the College. Such appointments would enable the College to demonstrate in a very visible way its understanding of the importance of current research and applied research expertise in its specialisms to the teaching of degree-level studies in those specialisms.

The College participates in a range of higher education networks in which applied research and development are discussed although the primary functions of those that it listed do not appear to be to provide support for subject-based applied research as distinct from the promotion of higher education in vocational institutions and international mobility.

The College has policies for identifying and dealing with academic dishonesty and plagiarism. The reported incidence of plagiarism in the College is very low.

The Assessment committee **recommends** that the College undertake periodic detailed "snapshot" analyses of assessments submitted in the

College (if necessary with outside assistance) to satisfy itself that the absence of plagiarism and academic misconduct it reports in the SER can be relied on.

The Assessment committee finds that in Research, Development and/or creative activity the College partially conforms to requirements.

3.1 RDC effectiveness	conforms to requirements		partially conforms to requirements	X	does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:

A higher education institution has defined its RDC objectives and measures their implementation.

A higher education institution monitors the needs of society and the labour market, and considers them in planning its RDC activities.

The Self-Evaluation Report stated that the **College's objectives in research development and creative activities** derived from the requirements of Estonian legislation (the Professional Higher Education Act); the College's own Statutes; its R&D Strategy; its Financial Strategy; its IT Strategy; its Development Plan and its Procedure for Applied Research.

The College defines research in terms of its outputs as:

- research papers that are publicised according to the ETIS classification (the classification system of the Estonian Research Information System);
- research ordered by an external partner or done to develop the college and the result of which is a publication or research report that has all the identifiers of an academic research;
- [a] student research paper the result of which is a publication that has all the identifiers of an academic research

The College's Self-Evaluation Report, following its R&D Strategy, stated the goals of the latter as to:

- support the development of the specialties taught at the College, including in-service training and retraining;
- support the use of evidence-based knowledge in teaching and meeting the overall objectives of the college;
- develop cooperation with the other research institutions, universities, enterprises/institutions and internship basis, with a combination of the existing fields in an innovative way and thereby increasing the added value of the enterprises/institutions;

- support the professional development of the membership
- develop a career model that supports cooperation with enterprises/organisations.

The Assessment committee has commented elsewhere that the targets the College has set for itself in its 2014 Development Plan lack ambition; the targets also lack clarity. The College follows the lead of the Estonian Rectors' Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences in defining the development of new programmes as an applied research activity. It occurred to the Assessment committee that in an exercise such as the present Accreditation review the approach followed by the College enables it to count the same activities twice: as programme developments and as applied research outputs. This approach does not, however, assist the College to identify where its positive strengths lie in research and development and masks areas requiring closer attention.

The Assessment committee is able to confirm that the College defines the objectives of its research development and creative activities. It suggests, however, that until the College is able to show, in the way that it describes the publications and research activities of its staff, that it is able to differentiate between academic and applied research that is published and recognised at national and international level, journalism and social commentary, and internally circulated curriculum and other papers, it will not be able to set targets in research and development for itself and its staff that will enable it to realise its potential.

The Self-Evaluation Report stated that in planning its research and development activities the college takes into account national and sectoral strategies and stakeholder expectations. It views the market research it undertakes and the dialogues it conducts with employers and representatives of local and national bodies to inform the development of the curriculum and new programmes within it as demonstrating that it does indeed conduct **investigations of social and labour market needs in planning research and development activities**. The Assessment committee took note of this argument but did not find it helped it to understand how the College identified emerging opportunities for research, applied research and development in its specialist areas outside the curriculum, for example, to become a regional centre of excellence in financial management.

The Assessment committee considers that the College and its staff have considerable unrealised potential in applied research and development. It **recommends** that the College should adopt a more demanding approach to defining and setting an agenda and targets for research, applied research and development in its specialisms outside curriculum development. This will enable it to adopt a more systematic approach to the management of its research and development activities, which is also **recommended**.

3.2 RDC resources and support processes	conforms to requirements		partially conforms to requirements	X	does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
Requirements:								

A higher education institution has an effective RDC support system.

A higher education institution has financial resources needed for RDC development and a strategy that supports their acquisition.

A higher education institution participates in different RDC networks.

RDC infrastructure is being updated and used effectively.

The Self-Evaluation Report described the College's **support systems for research and development activities** and stated that the Vice Rector for Development was responsible for the College's research and development activities with the College's management team. The SER also identified an R&D Steering Group which coordinates applied research across the College.

According to the SER, the College's process for receiving research proposals and deciding whether to support them requires the individual researcher in a Chair (possibly acting as the leader of a research group) to put forward a project proposal to the R&D Steering Group for evaluation and approval. If approved, the project is subject to an "agreement of compilation of applied research with the research group" which is submitted to the Rector for authorisation. The progress of authorised projects is monitored by the College through reports from the researcher to the R&D Steering Group, either on their own account or as the leader of a research group. The R&D Steering Group also receives reports on completed research projects. In addition to the R&D Steering Group, progress with research projects is also monitored by the Rector's Office; through yearly meetings of the Chairs; reports are made to the College Council and the Advisory Body, and in the College's Annual Report. The SER stated that the College measures the implementation of its goals in research, development and creative activities by collecting quantitative data on the number of articles, books, published presentations, and other publications produced by members of staff.

Members of the College's academic staff told the Assessment committee that when they applied to the College to attend conferences and workshops their applications were generally supported and that when calculating their workloads the College made a fair allowance of time for them to undertake research and development activities.

The College is to be **commended** for its readiness to support the attendance of its staff at conferences, exhibitions and seminars for its overall support for their work in research and development

As noted elsewhere in this report, the College has comprehensive information and communication technology provision, so that on-line access to research databases and digitally published journals can to some degree substitute for the limited physical resources of the Library which are directed, properly, to the support of the College's vocational students and higher education undergraduates rather than graduate and doctoral level research. As the College reviews its R&D Strategy, the Assessment committee urges it to consider what additional investment might be needed in its library to support a wider range of subscriptions to on-line data sources.

The Self-Evaluation Report noted that while institutions of professional higher education are legally required to undertake research, development and other creative activities they receive no specific state **finance** or funding for these purposes in their recurrent grant and that the College is obliged to fund research and development activities from the careful management of its finances and from funds secured through successful applications for State and the European Union project funds. The SER reported that the College had been successful in several applications to the State for funding, notably to support the installation of a fibre-optic link to the internet in 2010.

Reviewing the College's support systems for research and development activities the Assessment committee was not clear whether the College had arrangements to enable those with experience as successful researchers to induct other staff into the necessary procedures for managing their own research and research for others and support them. The College's Advisory Board has urged the College to appoint more staff with PhDs. The Assessment committee supports this call, and **recommends** the appointment of staff with PhD qualifications in subjects linked to its specialisms, who are themselves currently active researchers, to lead the development of research activity within the College and help it to redefine its research agenda. Such appointments would also enable the College to demonstrate in a very visible way its understanding of the importance of current research and applied research expertise in its specialisms to the teaching of degree-level studies in those specialisms.

Overall, the Assessment committee is satisfied that the College encourages its academic staff to make research proposals and that where proposals meet its requirements that it will support them financially. As the College takes forward the enhancement of its research and development activities, the Assessment committee encourages it to review its R&D Strategy to plan for greater research activity and the associated new appointments and financial support that will be necessary.

The Self-Evaluation Report stated that the College participated in several **R&D networks**. The Assessment committee noted that these were networks and organizations dedicated to promoting institutions of higher education and their applied and profession-related research predominantly focused on the areas of curriculum development and mobility.

Outside the area of curriculum development the Assessment committee found it difficult to identify in the SER areas where the College was actively engaged in applied research directed to the areas of its specialisms although, from the supplementary information provided by the College, it was clear that some of its staff are active contributors to refereed journals and professional associations. The Assessment committee urges the College to reflect on the continuing importance for its students of being taught by staff who are familiar with leading developments in their academic and professional fields and who are producers as well as consumers of the outputs of professional and applied research.

3.3 Student research supervision	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution includes students of all academic cycles in research, creative or project activity; and systematically surveys student satisfaction with their supervision.</i> <i>Professionalism, effectiveness and the workload of supervisors are reasonably balanced, which ensures the quality of research papers and positive graduation rates.</i> <i>Students are guided to recognize plagiarism and to avoid it.</i></p>								
<p>The College's Self-Evaluation Report stated that while final year higher education students can choose between being assessed through examinations or through the submission of a thesis, all higher education students are required to study research methodologies. The SER noted that the College publishes collections of the best student theses submitted by its higher education students and that the College enters the best theses and studies produced by its students into national competitions where the thesis topic is appropriate.</p> <p>The College expects each member of its full-time staff who holds a higher degree (Master's level, equivalents, and above) to supervise up to 10 higher education theses. When calculating the workload for each member of staff there is a standard allowance for each supervision that is applied and helps with balancing workloads between individual lecturers. The SER described a number of training courses that were provided for academic staff to refresh and enhance supervision skills including some within the scope of the PRIMUS programme. The College is to be commended for its work to ensure that it balances workloads across its teaching staff.</p> <p>The Assessment committee discussed with students and alumni how the College prepared students for research and to write their theses and how it supported them through supervision. It was told by current students that they were well briefed and supported throughout the process of conducting their research and writing their thesis. Students also told the Assessment committee that their views and feedback were regularly sought on matters that included supervision arrangements and that they were confident that the College paid attention to their views. As noted in earlier sections, the College is to be commended for the attention it pays to the feedback it collects from its students and staff.</p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report stated that in its Study Regulations and its "Procedures of Managing Academic Fraud and Inappropriate Behaviour in Lääne-Viru College" the College had defined plagiarism academic misconduct and other forms cheating, and the penalties to be applied when it was detected. The Study Regulations and the "Procedures of Managing Academic Fraud and Inappropriate Behaviour in Lääne-Viru College" were provided by the College as supplementary information with its SER and deal with their subject matter clearly and directly. The College has</p>								

established an "Ethics Commission" to be the arbiter when a piece of work is identified by a member of staff as possibly having been fraudulently produced is to be judged.

The Self-Evaluation Report noted that the College treated the work of countering academic dishonesty and plagiarism as a continuing process during the entire period that the student is studying with it, and that students were introduced in the first year of their studies to the principles of undertaking research, ethics, copyright, and data protection issues, and how to identify and avoid academic fraud. Similar themes were covered in more detail in sessions taken by students to prepare for their final year of studies.

Members of staff with whom the Assessment committee discussed the encouragement of academic integrity and the identification and treatment of academic dishonesty stated that the detection of plagiarism was a matter for individual staff. The SER stated that "the Ethics Commission has not received any report of violation of academic practices and in the last five years no students have been ex-matriculated due to plagiarism." Enquiring further, the Assessment committee was told by staff that when plagiarism was identified the fact was registered by the College. Where an instance of plagiarism is not sufficiently serious to require the matter to be sent to the Ethics Commission one or more lecturers would talk to the student involved and give advice on how to avoid plagiarism.

The Assessment committee considers that the low incidence of plagiarism reported by the College is noteworthy but out of line with the experience of other higher education institutions outside Estonia. It **recommends** that the College undertake periodic detailed "snapshot" analyses of assessments submitted in the College (if necessary with outside assistance) to satisfy itself that the absence of plagiarism and academic misconduct it reports in the SER can be relied on.

4 SERVICE TO SOCIETY
<p>General comments:</p> <p>The College publicises its vocational and higher education programmes through its website and through meetings. Its Advisory Board has urged it to take more energetic steps to publicise the College's programmes and their special features.</p> <p>The Assessment committee recommends that the College should produce a marketing strategy for its activities that, inter alia, makes use of social media to promote greater awareness across Estonia of what it provides in vocational education, higher education and professional updating through distance/blended learning through its VLE.</p> <p>The College's Centre for In-Service Training and Retraining coordinates contributions to in-service training from staff across the College to provide a valuable range of in-service training and re-training services, counselling and support to meet the needs and requirements of a range of local, County and National enterprises and bodies.</p> <p>The College provides community access to its facilities at Mõdriku and in its study centre in Rakvere</p> <p>The Assessment committee is satisfied that the College conforms to the requirements.</p>

4.1 Popularization of its activities and involvement in social development	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has a system for popularising its core activities. Employees of an institution of higher education participate in the activities of professional associations, and as experts, in other social supervisory boards and decision-making bodies.</i></p>								
<p>The Self-Evaluation Report stated that the College popularises and promotes its activities through providing in-service training and advisory services for the population of the County and promoting events and activities which it publicises through its website. The SER also stated that</p>								

the College publicised its work through outreach activities and other visits to schools and education "fairs". Although the SER mentioned Facebook® and YouTube®, as yet the College makes little organised use of these new social media outlets and others such as Twitter® to promote its activities.

The College's Advisory Board has urged the College to publicise its activities more vigorously, a point reiterated to the Assessment committee by the students alumni and stakeholders it met. As a provider of higher education through distance learning/blended learning, that is accustomed to promoting learning through its MOODLE VLE.

The Assessment committee acknowledges that the College has a system for popularising its core activities but finds that it does not appear to meet the College's immediate needs. It **recommends** that the College should produce a marketing strategy for its activities that makes use, inter alia, of social media to promote greater awareness across Estonia of what it provides in vocational education, higher education and professional updating through distance/blended learning through its VLE.

A paper supplied with the Self-Evaluation Report described the professional bodies and associations in which members of the College participated. These included several associations for professionals such as the Estonian Association of Accountants and the Estonian Social Work Association together with a substantial list of other bodies covering a wide range within the College's specialisms. Contacts such as these that staff make within the County and further afield across Estonia have the potential to provide the College with valuable information about the changing educational, social and commercial environment in which it operates and valuable marketing and other information for developing new programmes and in-service provision.

4.2 In-service training and other educational activities for the general public	conforms to requirements	x	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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Requirements:
A higher education institution has defined the objectives regarding in-service training and measures their implementation. In-service training is planned in accordance with the needs of target groups as well as with the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education. Participant satisfaction with the quality of in-service training is regularly surveyed and the results are used in planning improvement activities.

Discussing the College's **in-service training** the Self-Evaluation Report referred to the College's 2014 Development Plan, which states that the College will work to provide "regionally required in-service training, retraining and counselling, where long life learning and counselling services are provided to different interest groups." Specific activities identified for in-service training in the Development Plan include: organising in-service training and retraining; a counselling service; an incubation service (see below); bringing visiting lecturers to the region to carry out in-service training; providing informal training for members of the community; and making use of the potential of the Manor House at Mõdriku as a cultural and community venue. Given the College's success in developing distance/blended learning, the Assessment committee was surprised that the College was not exploiting the potential of blended learning to provide in-service training and re-training.

The College's Centre for In-Service Training and Retraining is based outside Mõdriku in Rakvere but also works at the main campus. In the course of the site visit the Assessment committee was able to meet staff who organise and provide in-service education, tour the College's Centre in Rakvere, view its facilities and talk to its managers. It learned that the College took its priorities in in-service training from the Development Plan for Lääne-Viru County. The College has promoted the training it offers to business and agencies across the County. Representatives of employers and other stakeholders from the County told the Assessment committee that there has been a good response to the training opportunities it has promoted, with several local and some cases national enterprises bringing training business to the College in information technology, management and language skills. The "incubation" activities for small business start-ups in Rakvere and the County were in operation at the time of the visit; one of the College's alumni who was a manager with this project met the Assessment committee and was able to describe its key features.

Stakeholders who met the Assessment committee during its visit to Mõdriku spoke warmly of the contribution the College makes to the development and support of local business and social enterprises across Lääne-Viru County. The College is to be **commended** for the close relations it has built with the people and employers of Lääne-Viru County.

Through its meeting with staff at the College the Assessment committee was able to appreciate the coordinating role of the Centre for In-Service Training and Retraining which was able to mobilise staff from the College's specialisms to provide a wide range of in-service and training courses. The Assessment committee also learned that the Centre for In-Service Training and Retraining worked with state and social agencies and organisations in Lääne-Viru County to provide training opportunities for the unemployed. The College seeks feedback from all those who participate in its in-service and other training activities, including adult learners. The Centre manages and monitors all in-service activities for the College. The Assessment committee recognises that the availability of funds determines when and with what advance notice its "clients" can come to it with requests for in-service training. Nonetheless, the Assessment committee encourages the College to discuss with its clients the merits of identifying longer term priorities so that the Centre for In-Service Training and Retraining might better plan for some of the demands that its clients can or might anticipate.

4.3 Other public-oriented activities	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>Public-oriented activities are purposeful, the results of the activities are periodically evaluated, and improvements are introduced based on those evaluations.</i> <i>A higher education institution contributes to the enhancement of community welfare by sharing its resources (library, museums, sports facilities, etc.) and/or by organising concerts, exhibitions, performances, conferences, fairs and other events.</i></p>								
<p>The Manor House at Mõdriku provides a fine setting for cultural events. During the site visit members of the College told the Assessment committee about some of the cultural and other events that the College hosted; these included local and County-wide meetings; employment and higher education fairs; competitions and recitals. The Assessment committee also learned that members of the community were able to use facilities at the College, such as the library, subject to some administrative requirements and prior notice.</p> <p>The College's Centre for In-Service Training and Retraining has also developed a series of workshops for elder citizens that serve an educational and a therapeutic function. These were prompted by an invitation to tender by the Estonian State, which funded the activities. The Centre also provides a debt counselling service for citizens which had supported more than 260 individuals between 2012 and 2014. The Assessment committee was also told that debt-counselling was also available to the College's own students. The provision of such services as the workshops and counselling services described above represents a commendable contribution by the College to the welfare of the community of Lääne-Viru County.</p>								