

ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

Institution: Tartu Ülikool / University of Tartu

Assessment committee:

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Coordinator: Liia Lauri

Dates of the assessment visit: 20-22 April 2015

Assessment committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA: /08/05/15/

Assessment committee received the comments of the institution under accreditation: /04/06/15/

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

Date: /10/06/15/

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:

The University of Tartu ('the University') is the largest university in Estonia both in terms of numbers of staff and students, and in the volume of its teaching, research and development activities. Its formation goes back to the seventeenth century and apart from a brief migration to Tallinn and Pärnu the University has an unbroken history in Tartu. The nine faculties and the European College, as well as institutions of the University, such as the museums and the library, are located in Tartu. The three regional Colleges are located in Narva, Pärnu and Viljandi.

The four Colleges differ from the Faculties of the University mainly by the fact that they do not have doctoral programmes and only a limited amount of research work is carried out. Viljandi Culture Academy offers Bachelor`s and Master`s degree programmes in music, theatre and dance arts, Estonian native crafts, and culture management. Narva College is situated in the north east of Estonia and acts as a centre for local Russian-speaking young people to obtain quality higher education. It concentrates on Civic Studies, Psychology and Pedagogy, Estonian Language and Literature, Russian Language and Literature, and Foreign Languages. Pärnu

College offers three degree programmes of professional higher education (Entrepreneurship and Project Management, Tourism and Hotel Management, Social Work and Rehabilitation Administration) and two master's programmes (Service Design and Management, Wellness and Spa Service Design and Management). European College is an interdisciplinary study and research centre that concentrates on issues related to the European Union and European integration. It is located in Tartu in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education building.

In 2014 there were 3,708 employees and 14,470 students in the University. The highest decision-making body in the University is the Council. Senate is the highest body concerned with academic decisions and includes student representation through its five student members. The University also has an advisory Board consisting of Rector, Vice Rectors, Deans, President of the Student Council, and other representatives.

The University organises itself under four areas of teaching and research: *Socialia* (largest by number of students), *Humaniora*, *Realia et Naturalia*, and *Medicina*. It is the only university in Estonia licensed to teach Medicine.

The vision of the University is to be a 'rapidly developing international research University, the centre of academic spirit in Estonia and a leader in social development'. The mission of the University focuses on its role as the national University of Estonia, bearing 'the responsibility for solving problems faced by the society by ensuring the continuity of Estonian intellectuals and language and culture and by contributing to the development of education, research and technology and other creative activities throughout the world'.

The requirements of these two statements set up certain tensions in various areas throughout the University's activities: tensions between comprehensive and specialised subject coverage; between the needs of teaching and research; between offering activities which address state and international agendas, which impacts, for example, the language in which teaching is delivered. These tensions will be noted as they occur throughout this report.

The Committee considers the Self Evaluation Report (SER) to be well written and well presented. It contained a great deal of relevant information and was an accurate description of the University. It was self-reflective and self-critical. During the visit all the meetings that the Committee experienced were conducted in an open and objective atmosphere and the dialogue was constructive and honest. The Committee feels that this open and honest dialogue is a feature of how the University operates.

Commendations:

1. The Committee commends the University, especially its regional Colleges, on their joint working to respond effectively to regional needs.
2. The Committee commends the University for its encouragement of student representation and involvement in governance.
3. The University is commended on the clarity and professionalism of its internal documents and on its willingness to share information openly.
4. The Committee commends the University on its wise use of EU funding, in particular in using it for new build and upgrading of buildings.
5. The Committee commends the University on its efforts to ensure that buildings are accessible to physically disabled users.
6. The Committee commends the University on the effectiveness of its research management which has led to international competitiveness and co-operation in certain areas, and increased funding
7. The Committee commends the University on its demonstrated strong ties between local and national industry and research staff which mutually benefit the training of students and serve the Estonian economy

Worthy of Recognition:

The Committee finds the University's secure and effective financial management to be worthy of recognition.

Recommendations:

1. The Committee recommends that the University implement fairly, consistently and without delay its proposed system of professional review.
2. The Committee recommends that the University ensures that systematic annual staff performance appraisal is carried out.
3. The Committee recommends that the University provides clear and accessible guidance on ethical behaviour for all staff and faculty.
4. The Committee recommends that the University makes the monitoring of students' academic progress (both credit accumulation and grade achievement) consistent across the faculties so that both students at risk of failure and those performing exceptionally well can be identified and supported.
5. The Committee recommends that the University concentrates its efforts on increasing international student mobility at all levels and in both directions (in-coming and out-going).
6. The Committee recommends that the University further considers ways that it can support all doctoral students to complete their degree in a timely way.

II Assessment areas and sub-areas

1 ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE
<p>General comments: The Committee found that all the requirements in this area are substantially met and the area conforms to requirements. The University has a clearly defined role in Estonian society, which is supported by its regional Colleges. The vision and mission of the University set up some tensions which the University may need to deal with in the future. There is a Strategic Plan based on the mission and a thorough annual report is produced. The University has undergone governance and organisational structure change in recent years. While human resource management is generally effective, there is still some work to be done on performance management of staff and gender equality. Financial management processes are extremely effective and the University has managed its use of EU funding particularly well. The Committee considered the area of financial management to be worthy of recognition.</p> <p>The Committee identified four commendations and three recommendations in this area. The Committee commends the University on the joint working of the University’s Faculties and its Colleges, its encouragement of student representation and involvement in governance, its internal documentation and open approach to information sharing, and its wise use of EU funding. The Committee makes recommendations concerning staff professional performance review, staff annual review, and provision of guidance on ethical behaviour.</p>

1.1 General management	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has defined its role in the Estonian society. 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. Key results of a higher education institution have been defined.</i></p>								

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.

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.

Internal and external communications of a higher education institution (including marketing and image building) are purposeful and managed.

Within Estonian society, the University has a clearly defined position which was understood by stake-holders both inside and outside the University. The University sees itself as distinctive in being the national University of Estonia, a University which teaches across all areas of knowledge and has a responsibility for teaching certain subjects which have particular importance to Estonian culture and heritage. The University has taken this state role very seriously and has developed a strong presence in Estonia and further afield.

The Directors of the regional Colleges articulated a strong role for their institutions and a definite position within the University structure. Colleges clearly value being part of the University and College students feel integrated into the University. The Colleges are responding strongly to regional needs and the **Committee commends the University, especially its regional Colleges, on their joint working to respond effectively to regional needs.**

However, the Committee also heard of a tension between the excellence required of the regional Colleges on account of their being a part of the University and being covered by its vision, and the demand from the regions to identify with regional agendas. The tension was said to be exacerbated by the limited funding available from regional sources.

The University's well-written Strategic Plan and the related action plans reflect the University's Mission, Vision and core Values and the country's priorities and society's expectations. The 2009-15 Strategic Plan, for example, includes goals such as 'use curriculum development to react flexibly to the changing needs of society'; 'in co-operation with the national government, implement measures to develop scientific terminology in Estonian and promote disciplines studying Estonian language and culture'; develop and strengthen the University's colleges as training and competency centres, in order to promote balanced development in Estonia through the transfer of knowledge and skills'.

Performance indicators for the Strategic Plan have been identified and these are reviewed by the Council at the end of the year and

new targets agreed. The University emphasises certain key indicators which it monitors as a score card. Faculties also use the scorecard approach and the Dean must report annually to the Rector. The University compares itself to international institutions in its strategic planning processes. A thorough Annual Report is produced which contains statistical data and detailed financial information.

The current Strategic Plan ends in 2015 and a new plan has been drawn up (to 2020). The Committee heard from various internal stake-holders that they had been consulted on the new plan through meetings, email lists, and so on, and that their ideas and suggestions had been taken into account.

The University has been undergoing changes to its governance and organizational structure since 2010. In common with other Estonian institutions a new Council and Senate structure was adopted in 2012. In 2016 a new statute will replace the advisory Board with the Rector's Office and a revised structure for University faculties, institutes and colleges will come into place. The structure has two tiers of governance and replaces the current nine faculties with four. The aim of the restructuring is to help to ensure that decisions taken at all levels will support the University's Mission and fulfil its objectives.

The Committee cannot yet judge the effectiveness of the new arrangements for the academic structure, but notes that student numbers are falling (a demographic feature affecting all HEIs in Estonia) while staff numbers remain the same, so it is possible that further consolidation may eventually need to be considered. In addition, the Committee noted that there still seem to be a significant number of small administrative units in the University and the Committee **suggests that the University might wish to consider whether further consolidation and rationalisation of administrative units could take place.**

The involvement of student representatives in all appropriate aspects of governance and advising is well established and appears by all accounts to work well. Students feel that their opinions are valued and considered. **The Committee commends the University for its encouragement of student representation and involvement in governance.**

Internal and external communications are managed by the Marketing and Communications Office under the Director of Administration. There is no formal Communications strategy but the objective of University communications is to serve the marketing function and there is therefore much outward facing activity. The Committee heard that performance indicators for this activity are set and monitored.

<p>Various developments in external communications have occurred in recent years including the opening of the research news portal Novaator. Internally the main methods of communication are the University intranet and email lists. Indicators of usage are kept and monitored. There is also a University journal edited within Marketing and Communications where University issues are discussed. The Committee saw examples of high quality guides and other documents produced for the internal audience. These publications were clear and produced to a professional standard. A good deal of University information is shared openly on its website, available in English. The University is commended on the clarity and professionalism of its internal documents and on its willingness to share information openly.</p>							
1.2 Personnel management	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition
<p>Requirements: <i>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.</i> <i>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.</i> <i>The principles of remuneration and motivation of employees are clearly defined, available to all employees, and implemented.</i> <i>Employee satisfaction with the management, working conditions, flow of information, etc., is regularly surveyed and the results used in improvement activities.</i> <i>Employees participate in international mobility programmes, cooperation projects, networks, etc.</i> <i>Employees base their activities on principles of academic ethics.</i></p>							
<p>The University's recruitment procedures are based on national regulation, as well as internal University guidance. There are job descriptions for academic staff and also published general qualification requirements for teaching and research staff. The Strategic Plan includes the aim to employ 'international, highly qualified (in both research and teaching), and creative academic staff, whose diversity enriches the teaching and research environment and ensures a high standard of teaching and research in the University'. It also aims that the University's non-academic staff are 'highly qualified and capable of ensuring the effective and high-quality operation of the University'.</p>							

The University is aware of certain risks to the sustainability of its workforce, pointing out in the SER that the proportion of staff members aged 30 and under has decreased recently. The University is managing this risk by the creation of junior research fellow posts.

The Committee heard that many (but not all) posts are awarded in open competition. The staff whom the Committee met had no criticisms of the fairness of the recruitment process. In common with all Estonian universities, the University can now offer open-ended contracts, and there is no longer a set retirement age. These developments make it essential that staff performance is reviewed regularly to ensure an effective and sustainable workforce and the Committee **recommends that the University implement fairly and consistently and without delay its proposed system of professional review.**

The Committee was told that the process of annual performance interviews is decentralized and not monitored by any of the University's central units. The Committee heard that it is not carried out consistently across the whole University and the **Committee recommends that the University ensures that systematic annual staff performance appraisal is carried out.**

The Committee heard that when selecting and appointing members of the academic staff, their past activities are taken into account in a balanced way, although the students whom the Committee met were not always convinced that teaching quality was considered as important as research expertise when appointments were made.

Remuneration is governed by published University salary rules. The Committee heard from several groups of staff that the principles of remuneration and motivation of employees are clearly defined, available to all employees, and implemented fairly.

Employee satisfaction with communication, services, problem-solving, and so on is regularly surveyed. Summaries are available on the internet and the results are used as part of the University's performance management system. The Committee heard from many members of staff that they are satisfied with their work environment and working conditions, although there were some complaints about the national level of academic salaries.

The SER points out that there is a gender pay gap, women associate professors earning on average 10% less than that of men. On the other hand female teachers are paid 16% more than their male counterparts. Even though the gender cap at the University is lower than the national average for education employees (26.4%) **the Committee suggests that the University should give consideration to whether the gender pay gap can be reduced further.**

The University has joined several international networks and mobility schemes (for example, the Coimbra group, the Utrecht network, Erasmus+). The International Cooperation Unit is responsible for managing agreements between partner universities which include staff and student exchanges. The Committee met various staff and faculty who participate in international mobility programmes, co-operation projects, networks, and so on. Between 2009 and 2013 the proportion of academic staff going on business trips abroad increased from 49.6% to 52%.

The Committee met staff who were aware of the need for an ethical approach to their work. However, although there is a Research Code of Ethics, and certain documents which lay our expectations for students in terms of avoiding academic misconduct, there is no one source of guidance and advice on academic ethics for staff and faculty. The Committee **recommends that the University provides clear and accessible guidance on ethical behaviour for all staff and faculty.**

1.3 Management of financial resources and infrastructure	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	X
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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 Committee considers that the University has secure and effective financial management, evidenced, for example by its intelligent use of EU funding. **The Committee finds this area of management worthy of recognition.**

The University has, over the past ten years, done an excellent job in using all available financing to bring its infrastructure to a very high standard. This has been achieved by combining external grants and EU funds as well as from internal resources, plus using bank

financing to bridge the cash-flow gaps. As a result, the University has not only acquired completely new infrastructure but, as importantly, it has built up a significant equity capital to support its future development.

The University monitors how efficiently the new buildings are used by its units and charges units 'internal rent' to provide for depreciation and maintenance costs. This means that the sustainability of each unit's use of grant-funded infrastructure can be tested at any time. The University has established a programme of disposing of non-essential properties. There is a centralised maintenance unit to ensure proper and cost-efficient property services across all of the University's buildings.

As a result, there is a high and growing satisfaction (monitored by feedback gathered annually) among the staff and students with work equipment and the working environment.

The Committee commends the University on its wise use of EU funding, in particular in using it for new build and upgrading of buildings.

The University has a number of management information systems to support its core management processes: there is a Document Management Information System, a Personnel and Financial Information System, and an Asset Management Information System. There are also dedicated areas of the University intranet for dealing with core processes: the Financial web, Salary web, and Asset web. Various work-flow tools support day-to-day management.

The budgeting process has been built up in close co-operation with the University Council whose Budget Committee works with the Finance Office to prepare a comprehensive annual budget for the Council to approve. There are budget and internal accounting rules according to which such processes operate. Monthly management reports are available on Financial web, which includes an assessment of performance of each unit. General financial statistics are also published monthly on the University website.

Annual financial statistics together with the University Activity Report as well as detailed budget documentation are published in a timely way on the University's website, both in Estonian and English. The reports are professionally compiled in both content and appearance.

Financial discipline seems to have been implemented at all structural levels so that every unit has to ensure that it has long-term

viability, while short-term funding gaps are covered by the University. Internal accounting charges units for the cost of maintaining their premises as well as deducting other University overheads on a monthly basis. The funding gaps and temporary deficits are dealt with by University 'internal loans' and appropriate interest cost and repayment schedules are charged to the corresponding units. The Finance team has on a few occasions asked the Rector to appoint a temporary financial administrator to units whose finances have not been sustainable.

While there is a rule that each new development project may be launched and any related contracts be signed only if the coverage of related direct and overhead costs is ensured, there is also the basis for making exceptions to this, in order to initiate projects that are of key strategic importance. The University Council has earmarked a development fund allocation in the University's budget to initiate and finance projects that do not yet have their own independent external financing sources.

While there are challenges that come from changing terms of EU Structural Fund financing, the University has a strong financial position to overcome these challenges and the **Committee suggests that it might consider increasing the financing of its development activities further, in order to raise its profile internationally.**

2 TEACHING AND LEARNING

General comments:

The Committee found that all the requirements in this area are substantially met and the area **conforms to requirements**. The university has defined its educational objectives and graduates students who are in demand as employees. New study programmes are based on the needs of the labour market through the communication and co-operation with various stake-holders. The University is seen as the strongest in the country in offering comprehensive higher education in Estonian and also seen as an attractive place to study at all levels. Student academic progress is monitored through a Study Information System and various forms of support are available to students. The drop-out rate, while lower than in some other institutions, is still high and the University is addressing this. Bachelor's and Master's students are supported to finish their programmes in a timely way, but less than a fifth of doctoral students complete their studies within the expected time. Students benefit from up-to-date educational technology and have opportunities to

give their feedback on their programmes and experience.

The Committee identified one commendation and one recommendation in this area. The University’s provision for physically disabled students is commendable. It is recommended that the University concentrates its efforts on increasing international student mobility at all levels and in both directions.

2.1 Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body	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 educational objectives and measures their implementation.</i></p> <p><i>A higher education institution educates students so they are nationally and internationally competitive.</i></p> <p><i>The number of student places is planned in accordance with the social need and the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>Students are provided with opportunities to study at a higher education institution regardless of any special needs.</i></p>								
<p>The Committee met with students, academic staff, and administrators who all agreed that the University has defined its educational objectives, and all stake-holders seem aware of them. These goals are clearly stated in each course syllabus, and for programmes. Objectives include content knowledge as well as cross-cutting transferable skills. Achievement of the goals is measured by individual assessment instruments in courses and course grades. The Study Information System (SIS) electronically monitors the progress toward degree for students, and the Programme Director has the responsibility to ensure that each student is making minimum progress.</p> <p>The curriculum for each programme is developed by the academic staff, approved by the Senate, and delivery is overseen by the Programme Director. An annual summary of the programme teaching is presented to the Deans of Faculties. Programmes are reviewed</p>								

on a regular basis of 5-7 years by an external panel, to ensure international competitiveness.

Meeting with employers confirmed that they are pleased with the University's current students as interns, and University graduates as employees. Several mentioned the desirability of hiring Tartu's high quality students.

Though the pool of college-age students is decreasing in Estonia, as is the University's enrolment, the student quality, as measured by entrance requirements, continues to increase. The quality improves, even as the quantity declines. This increasing quality is in alignment with a goal of the University to train the country's leading intellectuals.

With increasing frequency, students with special needs and disabilities are seeking higher education opportunities, which includes attending the University of Tartu. In 2006 an advisor for students with special needs was hired. Dealing with this varied group of capable students is still new to the University, but much progress has been made in accommodating physical disabilities. **The Committee commends the University on its efforts to ensure that buildings are accessible to physically disabled users.** Supporting students with learning disabilities, however, is an on-going issue. The Committee **suggests that in the interests of its vision to be a University which operates at the international level it renews its efforts to identify and support students with learning and other non-physical disabilities, capitalising on international best practice in this area.**

2.2 Study programme development	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 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 labor market of graduates are surveyed and analysed; the results are considered in the development of study programmes.

During the visit, the Committee found that the University of Tartu bases its new study programmes on its articulated purposes and the needs of the labour market through the communication and co-operation with various stake-holders.

Since 2013, the objectives relating to the number of student places to be offered are agreed in a three-year performance agreement signed with the Ministry of Education and Research. In 2015, the Estonian Ministry of Education specified a target number for graduates from the Faculty of Medicine.

It is the University's responsibility, required by the government to fulfil its role as the Estonian national University, to teach a comprehensive list of subjects in Estonian at the Bachelor's level. To support the objective of being a strong international University, on the other hand, various study programmes in English are developed by the faculties at the Masters level. Currently all Bachelors programmes, except Business Administration, and Medicine, are taught only in Estonian, while in 2014-15 of 76 Master's programmes on offer 14 were English-taught programmes. Programmes taught in English, either in addition to or in place of Estonian, are critical to attracting international students, and to making Estonian students competitive globally.

In the creation of new study programmes, it is the Programme Director's responsibility in each Faculty to co-operate with the teaching staff, the support units and Deans. The Committee experienced at the meetings with the teaching staff and Deans that this process is focused and managed and seems to be working effectively. However, there was some concern of limited flexibility in closing study programmes which have only a very small number of student participants, due to the objectives formulated by the government as noted above, and the difficulties of adapting specialised teaching staff to new areas.

The University is seen as the strongest in the country in offering comprehensive higher education in Estonian and also voiced as an attractive place to study at all levels by various students the Committee met. The involvement of students in development of the study programmes was found to work mostly through feedback forms and informal meetings and discussions between the Programme Managers and the students.

The regional colleges play an integral part in development of region-specific programmes and in meeting focused, critical national needs.

The Committee noted that, although changing needs of the labour market as well as satisfaction of the employers in Estonia and elsewhere are taken into account during the process of study programme development, this is not being done systematically, for example, an employer satisfaction and feedback survey has not been conducted.

The Committee found from the supporting documentation and meetings with the students, alumni and employers that the students and graduates of the University are an attractive workforce for employers in Estonia and the students are well-equipped to succeed in

their field. At the Bachelor’s and Master’s levels the students expressed that they feel their degree helps them to progress in their professional life and, for example, to get a better job.

However, the PhD students did not share a similar view and saw themselves primarily as gaining more knowledge and experience for their own intellectual satisfaction without this bringing any obvious benefits for starting an academic career, or in progressing in the Estonian job market.

2.3 Student academic progress and student assessment	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		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.

From the discussions with the teaching staff and students, as well as from the supporting documents the Committee found that student academic progress is monitored through the Study Information System (SIS) where the number of credits that a student has accumulated are entered and gathered together from all the courses. A student has to collect a certain number of credit points (ECTS) to be able to pass and graduate with a degree. Whereas the Office of Academic Affairs monitors whether a student has accumulated the credit needed to complete a year, a student’s grades are monitored in the Faculties. The Committee heard that different personnel in different Faculties could be responsible for this.

Students who have problems with meeting the requirements and achieving the course objectives are contacted and supported by the Student Advisers in the Office of Academic Affairs, the teaching staff and the staff responsible for the aforementioned monitoring process. However, the Committee learned that there is no system currently in place which can systematically evaluate and track the progress of exceptionally well-performing students. This additional monitoring process would enable these students to be offered more opportunities to develop, for example through positions as teaching or research assistants. The University has taken part of the TRACKIT project of the European University Association (EUA) to improve monitoring procedures at the University. **The Committee**

recommends that the University makes the monitoring of students' academic progress (both credit accumulation and grade achievement) consistent across the Faculties so that both students at risk of failure and those performing exceptionally well can be identified and supported.

The University is about to implement the system of having academic tutors in each Faculty to support students who have problems or concerns about anything related to the courses. The students who have been working with such tutors so far have expressed highly positive feedback and the need for these positions to be introduced University-wide.

The meetings with the teaching staff as well as students at the Bachelor's and Master's level demonstrated to the Committee that student assessment supports learning. The students are given marks for their work and, in most cases, receive assessed work back with noted mistakes and corrections. Also, the students are free and encouraged to ask for further feedback from the teaching staff where necessary, in order to support their development. The teaching staff confirmed that all the assessments are constructed so as to support students in achieving the specified learning objectives and outcomes.

The Committee noted a drop-out rate for Bachelor's and professional higher education study of 18% in 2013. While this is lower than in some other institutions it is nevertheless high enough to warrant attention. The high level of dropouts was explained in the SER as being due to students lacking knowledge about specific fields and areas of study prior to joining the University, and therefore choosing the wrong specialisation. In addition, the Committee heard that pressures from the job market simply attract students to leave their studies to take up a job. The same applies to the situation with efficiency of completion at the Bachelor's and Master's level. The support units such as the Career Unit and Student Advisers in the Office of Academic Affairs, focus on trying to better inform the students prior to joining the University about the fields of study. Efforts are made to co-operate more with secondary schools at the national level.

The Committee noted that the Career Unit offers a useful service but only a low percentage of students (10%) use it. The Committee **suggests that the University should explore the reasons for this and encourage a greater involvement of students with the careers service.**

The University has created a policy of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which sets out the procedure for taking into account the prior learning and work experience of applicants during admission and when integrating achievement on student mobility programmes

<p>with the established University curricula. For example, the University unit responsible for international student admissions studies the educational systems of the neighbouring countries in order to translate the students' graduation certificates to figures comparable to the results of Estonian national exams, which are the major tool of student selection at the Bachelor level. Also, in the Faculty of Medicine, students have to complete the SAT test in Biology as part of the admission process. Interviews are conducted where necessary. At the masters and PhD level, prior learning and work seem to be taken into account appropriately.</p>							
2.4 Support processes for learning	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition
<p>Requirements: <i>The organisation of studies creates an opportunity for students to complete their studies within the standard period.</i> <i>A higher education institution provides students with counselling related to their studies and career.</i> <i>A higher education institution supports student international mobility.</i> <i>Modern technical and educational technology resources are used to organise educational activities.</i> <i>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.</i></p>							
<p>Studies are organized such that Bachelor's and Master's students have the opportunity to finish their degrees in a timely manner. However, after meeting with doctoral students, and academic administrators (and as highlighted in the SER), it is clear that students in PhD programmes are not able to graduate within the standard period of 4-5 years, largely for financial reasons. Further detail is given in Section 3.3.</p> <p>The University of Tartu offers a variety of services and offices that provide advice and counselling to students. Although the services are decentralized, students the Committee met were knowledgeable about where to start the process of seeking help. The Programme Director within the Faculty, and the Office of Academic Affairs are clearly first stops. If issues could not be dealt with there directly, students are referred to the correct office. Student satisfaction, as measured by surveys, is high, and the presence of student representatives on all major decision-making and advisory bodies of the University assures opportunities for the student voice to be heard.</p> <p>Through the International Student Service, Programme Directors, and individual teachers, Estonian students are made aware of the</p>							

possibilities of international mobility. Several hundred students per year (approx. 3%), across all levels of higher education take advantage of this opportunity. When it comes to the internationalisation of the student body, nearly 10% of Master's and doctoral students are international, while less than 2.5% of Bachelor's students are international.

Here the Committee sees a tension between the University's role as the national university of Estonia, teaching all but two of the Bachelor's curricula in Estonian, and the campus's desire to expand its international footprint. International students who do come to the University for Bachelor's work cite strong support processes from International Services and Academic Affairs. The Committee notes certain current factors which would facilitate the University admitting a greater number of international students: spaces for students due to falling roles in Estonia, increasing per capita student funding, and the ability to deliver programmes in English. In view of these opportunities the Committee **recommends that the University concentrates its efforts on increasing international student mobility at all levels and in both directions (in-coming and out-going).**

The University has done an effective job using technology thoughtfully to enhance education. The availability and support of Moodle for course interactions, and the SIS for student and staff use, are well developed methods which have quickly become relied upon by all for monitoring progress in individual courses, and in students' progress in programmes. An aspect of technology use and online courses that has not yet been properly addressed is validating student identity when submitting work for grades. Teachers and students both identified this as an issue.

Students are routinely requested to provide feedback on their courses and on their satisfaction level with their University experience.

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

General comments:

The Committee found that all the requirements in this area are substantially met and the area **conforms to requirements**. The University conducts high quality research in many fields of study. Research and development activities are included in the University's Strategic Plan where there is an objective to ensure that research and development activities are nationally and internationally competitive. Needs of society are addressed by the University's research agenda. There are good contacts with and overview of labour market needs. The University has an effective research support system delivered by the Office of Research and Development. Various University support units are involved in seeking funding for research. A database of funding opportunities has been created

to make finding information easier. The University has been successful in obtaining EU funding, which comprise a significant part of the University's finances. The University includes students from all three cycles in research activities to some extent. There are some issues with the time taken for completion of doctoral students. The University has encouraged the admission of international doctoral students, who now make up 10% of the doctoral student population.

The Committee considered that the effectiveness of the University's research management was commendable, and also recommended that the University further considers ways that it can support all doctoral students to complete their degree in a timely way.

3.1 RDC effectiveness	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has defined its RDC objectives and measures their implementation.</i> <i>A higher education institution monitors the needs of society and the labour market, and considers them in planning its RDC activities.</i></p>								
<p>The University's activities in the field of fundamental and applied research are directed by the Vice Rector for Research who is responsible for research activities, including matters related to PhD studies, as well as for organising and developing the promotion of research. The Vice Rector for Development directs the University's activities in the field of knowledge transfer and research-based development.</p> <p>The University's Strategic Plan 2015 has the objective to ensure that research and development activities are nationally and internationally competitive. The University aims at high standards in all disciplines, and in particular that research, education and outreach prioritize Estonia's national culture and independence; support socio-economic development, improved public health, and innovation; promote knowledge-based businesses and industries, and evidence-based public policies. To promote research in arts and sciences of national importance, professorships in Estonian culture, language and history have been established as part of the University's performance agreement with the government. The development of the research and development area follows the objectives established in the University's Strategic Plan.</p>								

The Committee observed that while most research and development was carried out as a response to the University's strategic planning objectives, there was also the possibility of funding which enabled individuals to pursue unforeseen opportunities.

The University conducts high quality research in many fields of study. In order to evaluate the competitiveness of the University's research areas, the University participates in targeted evaluations and regular evaluations organized in Estonia. In the 2010 regular evaluation, the University received a positive evaluation in all four Research and Development areas (biosciences and environment, culture and society, health, natural sciences and engineering).

The University has an unique position in Estonia. For example, the country has twelve centres of excellence financed from EU structural funds. Centres of excellence are co-operative centres for highly qualified scientific research groups that are thematically close or complementary. The aim of the centres is to increase the level and effectiveness, and improve the international competitiveness of Estonian scientific research. The University plays a key role in 10 of these centres, The University coordinates the work of six centres and participates in another four.

Through networking with students, graduates, alumni and employers the University has a very good overview of labour market and other societal developments. The Committee heard evidence of several feedback loops. The University has good insight into the competencies of its academic staff and of societal needs. The support of the Office of Research and Development and the Technology Transfer Unit seems to effectively function to match academic staff competencies with societal needs. The University has created a database of services to provide enterprises and other partners with a prompt and clear overview of the services offered by the University. The University has regulations for processing development projects, for example 'Procedures for Managing Intellectual Property Created at the University of Tartu'.

The Committee found that the University takes its research role seriously. Research priorities are largely dictated by funding and grant opportunities, since the state block grant for research is relatively small. While the University has a good record of applying for and receiving grant funding both in Estonia and from the EU, there are risks to this approach if the University wishes to have a comprehensive coverage in all research areas (see also section 3.2).

The Committee noted a possible tension between the University's mission as the national University which ensures 'the continuity of

<p>Estonian intellectuals and language and culture’ within a comprehensive coverage of subjects, and its Vision to be a ‘rapidly developing international research University’. The second role may require more of a focused approach to choice of areas for involvement in order to use resources and funding effectively. The Committee suggests that the University may wish to give consideration to how to manage this tension in the future.</p>							
3.2 RDC resources and support processes	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition
<p>Requirements: <i>A higher education institution has an effective RDC support system.</i> <i>A higher education institution has financial resources needed for RDC development and a strategy that supports their acquisition.</i> <i>A higher education institution participates in different RDC networks.</i> <i>RDC infrastructure is being updated and used effectively.</i></p>							
<p>In general research output in the University is increasing and there is an articulated demand from business, industry and the public sector for knowledge-based services.</p> <p>The University has an effective research support system delivered by the Office of Research and Development. This Office, within the remit of the Vice Rector for Research, is complemented by the Technology Transfer Unit under the remit of the Vice Rector for Development. Effective support for project funding is available for all academic staff, including professional assistance to develop budgets in accordance with requirements, draft contracts, and so on.</p> <p>The Office of Research and Development, the Finance Office, the Personnel Office, the Estates Office (Procurement Unit) and the Marketing and Communication Office assist in seeking financing possibilities, initiating and implementing projects and organizing the communication of research results. A tendency to have several administrative units engaged simultaneously was observed by the Committee (see section 1.1).</p> <p>The University offers favourable conditions for applying for research and development projects: the Office of Research and Development provides support services in project coordination, management and information exchange; all staff have access to</p>							

various research and development-related background information for use in funding applications and management decisions.

A database of funding opportunities has been created to make finding information easier. Information on funding opportunities is also disseminated via the University's mailing list on grants, and a series of information seminars was launched (2013) to disseminate information on topics related to research and development (for example, the facilitation of establishment of new businesses and ultimately spin-off companies, promotion of research outreach activities, and so on).

Research funding allocated to the University made up 53.6% of funding for research in Estonia in 2013. In that year the institutional (competitive) research funding in Estonia was € 19.3 million, of which the University was granted funding of € 11 million for 59 themes (including € 6.5 million for 38 new institutional research funding projects). Individual research funding in Estonia was € 3.6 million, of which the University was granted € 2.3 million for 46 projects.

As noted above, research priorities are largely dictated by funding and grant opportunities. Staff whom the Committee met were aware of the danger of the instability of relying on project funding and stressed the need to diversify funding streams. Financial resources for research work vary from subject to subject. Because of the dependence on project funding, small research groups are particularly at risk since they have almost no buffer to carry them between projects. Staff said that it was difficult to attract doctoral students in such situations. This again highlights the tension between the University's desire to have comprehensive coverage of subject areas, and the desire to have effectively funded and sustainable research.

In addition, because research activities are largely project funded the University runs the risk of losing cohesion across the academic spectrum, and needs to be alert to interdisciplinary opportunities that may not be readily funded from existing competitive programmes. Likewise minor research subjects (e.g. taxonomy) may easily be crowded out.

Currently this situation is not damaging the University's research profile, but the Committee **suggests that the University keep the potential risks in mind.**

EU funding, in particular EU regional funds, comprise a significant part of the University's finances. These resources have facilitated up-grading of buildings and equipment, and have supported doctoral schools (see 3.3). The Committee received ample evidence from the SER, as well as from academic staff, students and management interviews, for high quality research activities. For example, the number of high-level research publications published per academic staff member at the University was 0.87 in 2009 and 1.28 in 2013. The number of high-level publications has grown at the University each year, and in 2013 was 68% of all published research

publications. The University produces almost twice as many publications per staff than other universities in Estonia.

The University encourages the creation of spin-offs companies based on its know-how and infrastructure. From 2010 to 2014 19 new enterprises were established, and the total is 48 spin-off companies. A support system for knowledge and technology transfer (including the protection and marketing of intellectual property) has also been developed. The University’s income from entrepreneurship activities is substantial: the SER reports that in 2011-12 it amounted to € 5.9 million.

The University has carried out a number of successful co-operation projects with private and public sector organizations in Estonia. Research and development co-operation is carried out with both large and small enterprises. Cooperation with large enterprises has ranged from the improvement of work environment conditions to the development of new technologies. In addition, small and medium sized enterprises have been able to use the University’s laboratories and the services of structural units in conducting development or research work. In 2013, a total of € 3.9 million worth of new research and development agreements was concluded with enterprises. There is a database of services to provide enterprises and other partners overview of the services offered by the University. The University organizes entrepreneurship days in the course of which it has gathered and received feedback from enterprises and other partners.

The University is an active partner in national and European research infrastructure networks, for example the ESFRI¹ roadmap infrastructure. The University participates as a founding partner in 5 ERICs², and as a partner in CERN, the European Space Agency (ESA), the MAX IV Laboratory, the European Social Survey (ESS), and Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). The University runs research centres of global reach, for example the Centre for European Studies.

The Committee commends the University on the effectiveness of their research management which has led to international competitiveness and co-operation in certain areas, and increased funding.

3.3 Student research supervision	conforms to requirements	X	partially conforms to requirements		does not conform to requirements		worthy of recognition	
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¹European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures: EU process which identifies new Research Infrastructures of pan-European interest

² European Research Infrastructure Consortia, selected by ESFRI

Requirements:

A higher education institution includes students of all academic cycles in research, creative or project activity; and systematically surveys student satisfaction with their supervision.

Professionalism, effectiveness and the workload of supervisors are reasonably balanced, which ensures the quality of research papers and positive graduation rates.

Students are guided to recognize plagiarism and to avoid it.

Conditions have been created for admission of international doctoral students and for studies abroad for all doctoral students.

A higher education institution includes recognised foreign scientists in the provision of doctoral studies and the supervision of doctoral theses.

The University includes students from all three cycles in research activities, and many students contribute to practical research activities, although the extent and knowledge of these activities varied across subjects, according to the students whom the Committee met. There seems to be no concerted effort to ensure that Bachelor's students take part in research, though many do.

Doctoral students are taught good research practice and ethics. The students whom the Committee met knew of plagiarism and the penalties incurred for repeated plagiarism. In co-operation with other Estonian universities the University participated in the development of the portal KRATT which is aimed at preventing plagiarism. The portal allows users to analyse Estonian-language theses and papers that have been digitally archived by higher education institutions, comparing these to each other and to the internet sources, and to manually upload theses and papers to compare their content with the archives of higher education institutions.

The University has about 4% international students across all levels, although there are higher percentages at Master's and doctoral levels. As noted on page 16, of the 76 Master's courses on offer in 2014-15, 14 were taught in English. Six of these were in the area of Realia and Naturalia. The University has encouraged the admission of international doctoral students, who now make up 10% of the doctoral student population. Most doctoral students study for at least one semester abroad.

The University participates proactively in exchange programmes, and recruits students for full-time study at all three levels of higher education. Foreign students reported great satisfaction with the University's academic programmes as well as with the University's services for foreign students. Cost levels for a foreign student are reasonable. There are almost forty nationalities among research staff.

EU structural funds support 13 doctoral schools at Estonian universities. The University leads eight doctoral schools and participates in another three as a partner. National and international co-operation is mandatory in a doctoral school. Among other things, doctoral schools support internationalisation and student mobility, interdisciplinary research projects, the development of the Estonian research language and terminology.

Doctoral programmes are regulated in accordance with good practice and the University's regulatory framework is like others in Estonia. 'Good Practice of Doctoral Studies' at the University was approved by the Senate on 19 December 2014.

All doctoral students receive a doctoral allowance in their first year of studies. In following years the doctoral allowance is available to doctoral students who have passed the progress review and have not exceeded the standard duration of the curriculum. In 2014 the allowance (€ 383.47 a month) was 40% of the average salary. Due to this low financial support PhD students are *de facto* part-time students, undertaking paid employment; this leads to an extended length of study for doctoral students, drop outs and inefficiency in the University's doctoral program. This is exacerbated, according to students and staff, by the lack of recognition that employers give to doctoral qualifications.

The progress of PhD students does not seem to be monitored systematically and the success and support of these programmes depend mostly on the activeness of the supervisor and the student. The University has started to address the problem of support for doctoral students in some areas but given the issue with PhD completion rates noted above the **Committee recommends that the University further considers ways that it can support all doctoral students to complete their degree in a timely way.**

The Committee found an emphasis on internationalisation in the provision of doctoral studies in line with the University's strategy. Internationalisation is one of the purposes of the doctoral schools in which the University participates, and also of the major European infrastructure projects in which the University is an active participant. Doctoral students are involved in these activities. However, the Committee noted a difference across the disciplines in terms of how far such involvement is carried: it is greater in the science disciplines. Doctoral students expressed their satisfaction with the exposure to international scientists (in lectures, short courses, and increasingly from internationally recruited staff) that they received.

4 SERVICE TO SOCIETY

General comments:
 The Committee found that all the requirements in this area are substantially met and the area **conforms to requirements**. The University publicises its core activities in numerous ways, including a research news portal. Staff participate in professional networks and other bodies although these activities are not tracked in a systematic way. Much of the University’s current in-service training focuses on teacher training; the Strategic Plan identifies this as a basis for further expansion. The University has established guidelines for setting up continuing education programmes and training is offered to organisers. University research groups have string ties with local industries and companies which benefits local society. It maintains a Botanic Garden and two Museums open to the public, and plays a central part in the development of the city of Tartu.

In this area the Committee commended the University on its strong ties between its research groups and local industries.

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 University of Tartu is well-known in Estonia both as a University and as a place of research. It popularises its core activities in various ways. It has a number of permanent programmes for elementary and high school students through its Gifted and Talented Development Centre and frequent visits to schools, as well as hosting events at its museums.</p> <p>It runs a research news portal, participates in radio and TV broadcasts and requires its PhD dissertations to contain a popular science summary in both Estonian and English. As a result, the University is by far the most used research news source in Estonia. The University tracks the effectiveness of its outside activities and communication and adjustments are made accordingly.</p>								

Many of the University lectures are open to the public and the University has a series of special public events and lectures that have a long history especially among Tartu public. Some of University`s initiatives e.g. AHHA Science Centre have gained wider reputation also in neighbouring countries.

Participating in the work of various professional associations and other advisory bodies in society is highlighted in the University academic staff job description and the employers the Committee met confirmed this to be the case. However, the University does not track the activity of its employees in this sphere nor is it consistently monitored in performance appraisals. Going forward, the Committee **suggests that a more formal evaluation system should be considered as incentives for the staff to be active not only in the local community, but also nationally and internationally, need to be monitored and improved.**

The committee heard from the interviews with academic staff that they participate in collaborative projects with industry, although the University does not track the activity of its employees in this sphere, nor is it consistently monitored in performance appraisals. However, the Committee found significant evidence of strong ties with local and regional industry. All the participants from industry whom the Committee met had ties with the University`s research activity; furthermore, numerous collaborations with small businesses are listed on the university website. The collaboration of the Institute of Physics with the Estonian oil shale industry to monitor the radioactivity of their residues and OÜ Metalliekspertid`s collaboration with the film technology laboratory of the Institute of Physics are examples of ties between industry and university research groups.

The Committee commends the University on its demonstrated strong ties between local and national industry and research staff which mutually benefit the training of students and serve the Estonian economy.

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.

<p><i>Participant satisfaction with the quality of in-service training is regularly surveyed and the results are used in planning improvement activities.</i></p>							
<p>The University has a Lifelong Learning Centre that co-ordinates as well as organises public and private educational events and courses for the public. While a large part of such activities are currently concentrated on teacher training, the centre serves as a good basis for further expansion of continuing education and this area has been identified as a priority in the Strategic Plan.</p>							
<p>The University has made use of its MOOCs to make some of the continuing education programmes available in English internationally. Also, courses in Russian are available and academic credits gained from continuing education courses can be used towards the completion of academic degrees.</p>							
<p>The University has established guidelines for setting up continuing education programmes, provides centralised training to the course directors and monitors both quantity and quality of the results. Nearly 50% of continuing education participants are teachers and medical sector employees who must participate in in-service courses to maintain accreditation requirements. The Committee was told that government funding is available for some in-service courses for teachers. The Committee considered that it would be helpful to distinguish (i) government-funded training from (ii) courses funded in other ways which are delivered in response to other needs or other customers. The Committee suggests that the University separate out these two categories in its strategic planning to enable more effective monitoring of targets related to in-service training and other continuing educational activities.</p>							
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 committee heard from the interviews with academic staff that they participate in collaborative projects with industry, although the</p>							

University does not track the activity of its employees in this sphere, nor is it consistently monitored in performance appraisals.

The University houses within its structure several units that are important nationally and might not exist without University support, for example, the regional colleges as well as library and museums, including the observatory and the Botanic Garden. The Committee was told that, in 2014, various events at the museum attracted more than 80,000 visitors, and that the university's Botanic Garden is visited by 120,000 people each year. Many of the costs of these facilities are covered through an overhead levy on the University's structural units. It is important that the University obtains recognition for such support from relevant national institutions so that long-term sustainable financing can be assured for those activities.

The University is perhaps the most important institution involved in the development of Tartu city. The municipality and University have multiple channels of co-operation: from joint projects such as the AHHA Science Centre, the Science Park, and so on, to co-operation agreements that are adjusted annually. Based on interviews with employers and the representatives of the municipality, the Committee gained the impression that it is the University that is the main driver of such joint initiatives, using not only its knowledge but also financial resources to get many of the initiatives off the ground. The Committee considers that there is room for further structured collaboration between the University and Tartu city to develop and promote the city as an enriching place to study and conduct research, should the University wish to attract more students and researchers.