

**Decision Regarding the Assessment of the
Law Study Programme Group
University of Tartu**

15/09/2016

The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET decided to approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Law study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu in seven years

On the basis of subsections 12² (1) and 10 (4) of the Universities Act, point 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA') and point 41.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', authorised in point 3.7.1 of the above-mentioned EKKA Statutes; the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of EKKA (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 17.04.2015 the University of Tartu and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct the quality assessment of the study programme group.
2. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 15.03.2016, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Law study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology and Tallinn University (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Achim Albrecht, Chair	Professor, University of Westfalia (Germany)
Michelle Everson	Professor, Birkbeck University of London (United Kingdom)
Madis Pääs	Partner in OÜ Luberg & Pääs Law Office, Board Member of the Estonian Bar Association (Estonia)
Hildegard Schneider	Professor, Maastricht University (Netherlands)
Susann Schultz	Student, University of Greifswald (Germany)
Kristel Siitam-Nyiri	Vice-Chancellor, Ministry of Justice (Estonia)

3. The University of Tartu submitted the following programmes for evaluation under this study programme group:
Law (BA)
Law (MA)
Information Technology Law (MA)
4. The University of Tartu submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 25.01.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 19.02.2016.
5. An assessment visit was made to the University of Tartu on 28.04.2016.
6. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 13.06.2016, EKKA forwarded it to the University of Tartu for its comments on 15.06.2016, and the University delivered its response on 22.06.2016.
7. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 8.07.2016. That assessment report is an integral part of the decision, and is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee's final assessment report along with the University's self-evaluation report to the Council members on 31.08.2016.
9. The Council with 8 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 15.09.2016 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Law study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu.

Assessment at the Levels of the Study Programme Group and Study Programmes

Strengths

- Study programmes are well-structured and up to date. The content of the study programmes serves the needs within Estonia as well as within the international context. Feedback from stakeholders is taken into account when developing and designing study programmes.
- The study programmes provide a strong research basis.
- The field of human rights, which helps to raise the international profile of the University, is worthy of special recognition.
- Teaching and learning materials and facilities (including the library and access to databases) are good.
- The University implements good teaching practice. Teaching methods are modern, interactive and engaging (moot courts, case studies, etc.). Learning outcomes are clearly described and attainable.
- The teaching involves high level practitioners as well as younger members of the staff, who further develop and improve modern teaching methods.
- Internal motivation of the teaching staff is high. Cooperation among the teaching staff is good and students assess their teaching skills positively. The teaching staff also actively contribute to the publishing of 'Juridica', the most important local legal journal.
- Teaching staff from other faculties of the University as well as from other higher education institutions teach in the Information Technology Law programme.
- The working environment is flexible allowing individual time management for part-time staff.
- Administrative support is good.

- Commitment and enthusiasm of the students at the School of Law of the University of Tartu is noteworthy. The student body is well organised and active (active participation in ELSA, legal clinic, etc.).
- The overall student satisfaction with the study programmes is very high. The students assess their relations with the teaching staff as good.
- Employment rates of graduates are high and the University of Tartu (UT) has a very good reputation among employers. The study programme provides students with skills needed for success in the labour market.
- Feedback from students is taken into account when designing study programmes and they are involved in management of the School of Law.
- Open University serves well the needs of the students in lifelong learning.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- Despite the School of Law having become part of the new Faculty of Social Sciences, the assessment committee believes it is important to retain visibility of the study of law. In view of the specifics of the international labour market, the committee is of the opinion that the degree awarded at graduation from law study programmes should be awarded as a degree in law and not a degree in social sciences.
- It is advisable to enhance collaboration with other units in the UT Faculty of Social Sciences and, along with the fields of human rights and information technology law, also offer new specialisations, such as law and economics, law and business, or law and finance.
- One of the key strengths and distinguishing characteristics of law taught at the University of Tartu is its methodological completeness, which should definitely be retained to ensure effective functioning of domestic law in Estonia and the success of graduates in the labour market.
- At present the content and structure of the Information Technology Law programme are not fully consistent with its name. The name 'Law and Information Technology' would better reflect the content of the study programme. This programme is mainly taught by external teaching staff.
- Taking into account the needs of the students and the close competition among law programmes provided in Tallinn, the learning environment in the University's Tallinn campus should be refurbished and modernised (rooms, furniture, library, accessibility). This would help to improve the attractiveness of the study programme to international markets.
- At present the study programmes are not sufficiently funded. Since the field of information technology law is rapidly evolving, it is particularly important to ensure consistent funding, to support changes necessary to the study programme and to keep the teaching staff up to date with the latest developments. It is advisable to continue seeking additional funding from the private sector.
- In order to continue to involve teaching staff with international profiles, it is important to ensure them of competitive salaries.
- The necessity of a centralised approach to determining student admission numbers should be reconsidered.
- The implementation of good teaching practices should be closely monitored in order to ensure a uniformly high quality of teaching.
- There is need for a better research strategy which will balance teaching and research functions in terms of allocated time, resources, etc.
- Criteria for teaching staff recruitment should be more flexible. When selecting staff for positions, their valuable work in commenting on legislation and composing textbooks should be recognised.

- A comprehensive system for professional development of teaching staff (including practitioners) and for staff feedback should be developed in order to improve their didactic and language skills. Teaching staff are advised to more actively participate in pedagogical and language trainings offered by the University of Tartu.
 - Instead of 'buying in' expertise in the field of information technology from other institutions, a more interdisciplinary approach within UT could be considered.
 - It is advisable to establish an active network of alumni.
 - International student mobility should be encouraged.
 - More speciality-related electives in English should be offered to Estonian students.
 - More electives should be offered to Information Technology Law students.
10. Point 41 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', establishes that the Quality Assessment Council shall approve an assessment report within three months after receipt of the report. The Council shall weigh the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations pointed out in the assessment report, and then shall decide whether to conduct the next quality assessment of that study programme group in seven, five or three years.
11. The Council weighed the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations referred to in point 9 of this document and found that the study programmes, the teaching conducted under these programmes, and development activities regarding teaching and learning conform to the requirements, and, on the basis of point 41.1 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education',

DECIDED

to approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Law study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at the University of Tartu in seven years.

The decision was adopted by 8 votes in favour. Against 0.

12. The Bureau of EKKA will coordinate a date for the next quality assessment of the study programme group with the University of Tartu no later than 15.12.2022.
13. The Council proposes that the University of Tartu will submit an action plan to EKKA with regard to the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the report no later than 15.09.2017.
14. A person who finds that his or her rights are violated or his or her freedoms are restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding. A judicial challenge to the decision may be submitted within 30 days after its delivery, filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

Tõnu Meidla
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council