

# THE ESTONIAN QUALITY AGENCY FOR HIGHER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR 2017-2022

### Self-definition

The Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) is the leading competence centre in the field of external evaluation of educational institutions in Estonia. EKKA's activities are based on the needs of the Estonian education system and learners as well as guidelines and agreements in the areas of European higher and vocational education<sup>1</sup>. In its daily work EKKA draws on up-to-date know-how tailored to the local context and informs stakeholders of the results of external assessments and analyses conducted thereof.

EKKA's **core process** is external evaluation of educational institutions that is accompanied and supported by the following **key activities**:

- Institutional accreditation of higher education institutions
- Quality assessment of study programme groups in higher education
- Accreditation of study programme groups in vocational education
- Carrying out expert analyses in the context of granting educational institutions the right to conduct studies
- Analysing assessment results
- Informing the general public of the outcomes of assessments
- Training the assessment experts
- Providing training on self-evaluation for the educational institutions
- Participating in international networks for external quality assessment of educational institutions

EKKAs **main target groups** are the educational institutions under evaluation, the Ministry of Education and Research and individuals who continue to pursue education.

EKKA involves educational institutions, student organisations, ministries, professional associations and employers' organisations **as partners** in its development activities.

EKKA collaborates with the quality agencies of other countries and participates in the activities of the following international associations and networks: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ([ENQA](#)), International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education ([INQAAHE](#)) Central and Eastern

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<sup>1</sup> [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (2015); [European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training](#)

European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education ([CEENQA](#)), European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training ([EQAVET](#)).

EKKA is registered with the [European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education \(EQAR\)](#).

## Mission

EKKA's mission is to support the development of a culture of quality in the field of education and enhance the openness and competitiveness of the Estonian society thereof.

## EKKA's core values

**IMPARTIALITY:** consistent application of the principle of equal treatment in all activities.

**COMPETENCE:** competent assessment experts; commanding up-to-date know-how of one's field; engaging in constant professional development.

**COOPERATION:** involving partners and accommodating their needs in a balanced manner to achieve the best results possible, applying shared values in team work; collaborative learning and teaching at international level.

**OPENNESS:** clarity and comprehensibility of assessment procedures, public availability of assessment results; flexible adaptation to changes in the environment.

## Vision 2025

EKKA shall be an internationally recognised competence centre in the field of enhancement led quality assessment, valued by its partners.

## Essential success factors –

- 1. Professionalism:** the know-how of EKKA staff members and assessment experts is up to date. Reports by EKKA assessment committees and EKKA analyses of assessment results are professional and inspirational and feed into educational institutions' development activities.
- 2. Efficiency:** objectives are attained using optimal resources.
- 3. Relevance and timeliness of communication:** information on assessment results is timely, tailored to specific target groups and comprehensive.
- 4. International recognition:** the compliance of EKKA's activities with international standards and guidelines is attested by its membership of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

## Objectives for 2022

- I. EKKA is a reliable partner
- II. EKKA's activities are effective and efficient
- III. EKKA is internationally known and recognized

## Assessment criteria and indicators

- I. EKKA is a reliable partner
  1. Quality assessment by EKKA supports the implementation of national and sectoral strategies as well as strategies by educational institutions under evaluation. The Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 shall constitute an important basis for the revision of standards and criteria. Indicators: amendments to EKKA regulations deriving from the ELLS 2020 objectives; assessment regulations will take into account specificities of educational institutions resulting from their objectives.
  2. The assessment decisions taken by EKKA are professional, evidence based and thoroughly explained. Indicators: outcomes of feedback seminars demonstrate positive developments; the rate of appeals filed by the educational institutions or other stakeholders against assessment results is consistently low.
  3. The satisfaction of educational institutions under evaluation with the professionalism of external assessments conducted by EKKA is consistently good or growing. Indicators: improved feedback on assessment visits (above all on the relevance of questions and atmosphere during interviews), positive developments indicated at the feedback seminars.
  4. Information about EKKA's activities is relevant, timely and tailored to target groups. Indicator: user statistics of the EKKA website and databases; the number of compiled overviews of assessment results or presentations for different target groups (2 overviews/presentations per year); the number of items of media coverage; joint activities with Rajaleidja counselling centres to inform people pursuing their studies about the quality of higher and vocational education.
  5. Employers are informed about the results of quality assessments in higher and vocational education. Indicator: number of employers in councils, assessment committees and development task forces; a

systematic approach is applied to inform and engage employers representing the field under assessment.

6. EKKA is involved in the preparation of a further education quality assessment concept and other development actions pertaining to quality assessment. Indicator: number of development groups on external quality assessment where EKKA is represented.

## II. EKKA's activities are effective and efficient

7. The planning and implementation of external quality assessment is flexible and fit for purpose, drawing on the specificities and the context of the educational institution as well as the need to achieve the objective using resources in an optimal way. Indicators: number of integrated assessments (higher and vocational education combined, institutional and study programme assessment combined, linked assessment of doctoral studies and evaluation of research), positive feedback from the educational institutions.
8. Assessment reports and analyses by EKKA form a basis for the educational institutions' development activities aimed at promoting quality. Indicators: feedback from educational institutions, analysis of action plans submitted during follow-up activities, outcomes of mid-term seminars, self-evaluation reports (in re-evaluations).
9. EKKA has made a marked contribution to the promotion of quality culture of educational institutions. Indicators: trainings/seminars conducted; number of participants (representatives of educational institutions, experts, and learners), results of re-evaluations, results of analysis of the quality of self-evaluation reports.
10. Increased learner awareness about requirements to the quality of education and a well-versed understanding of a learner's role in assuring the quality of education. Indicators: number of students having completed EKKA's training; number of learners (including vocational education students) having participated in assessments; number of events carried out and feedback from a quality awareness project implemented in cooperation with the Federation of Estonian Student Unions.
11. Amendments relating to external quality assurance to higher and vocational education legislation, that will allow to take better into account the specificities and objectives of the educational institution and to support the development of a quality culture. Indicator:

proposals made by EKKA and to what extent they are taken into on board.

12. Policy makers in the field of education take assessment results into account when making various decisions (on financing, structural changes etc.). Indicator: examples from practice.

### III. EKKA is internationally known and recognized

13. EKKA is a full member of ENQA and registered with EQAR.
14. EKKA disseminates analyses compiled on the basis of assessment results as well as best practices at international conferences. Indicator: Number of presentations delivered at international conferences (at least 2 presentations per year), a stable number of publications.
15. EKKA participates in development projects of quality assurance systems in other countries and conducts external assessments related to development projects.
16. EKKA participates actively in international networks for external quality assessment of higher and vocational education (ENQA, INQAAHE, EQAVET, CEENQA). Indicators: participation in 1 working group for higher and 1 for vocational education per year; a representative of EKKA is member of the Board of ENQA or INQAAHE.
17. EKKA has organized at least one international large scale event in Estonia.

## Implementation

To plan necessary actions for achieving the objectives in its development plan, EKKA will prepare a work plan for each calendar year. Implementation of the planned developments will be evaluated at EKKA's development workshops as deemed necessary, but at least once a year.

EKKA shall report once a year to the Quality Assessment Council on the progress in achieving the objectives of the development plan.

*Approved by the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education and the Quality Assessment Council for VET at the joint session on 6 January 2017.*