

## **Assessment Report**

Higher education study programme groups:

### **Internal Security**

### **Business and Administration**

Vocational Education study programme group:

### **Protection of property and persons**

Estonian Academy of Security Sciences

2016

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## Introduction

When a quality assessment of a study programme group is undertaken, a number of factors will be considered. These will include the extent to which the programmes and their studies and development activities conform with the required legislation, national and international standards and developmental directions. The purpose of the assessment is to provide recommendations to improve the quality of studies.

An external quality assessment of a study programme group should support the internal evaluation and self-development of the institution of higher education. The quality assessment of study programme groups will never result in sanctions: rather, the expert assessment findings are used to develop recommendations.

Quality assessment of a study programme group takes place at least every seven years, as specified in the regulation approved by EKKK Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education.

The Minister of Education and Research is extending the right of vocational education institutions and professional higher education institutions which provide vocational education to conduct vocational studies in a curriculum group. To gain the right to offer these new programmes, the school's curriculum group will need to be accredited. A study programme group consolidates the curricula of similar specialties.

Prior to accreditation all of the following will be considered: the quality of teaching work, management and leadership, staff management, cooperation with interest groups and resource management at present, and their future sustainability. Based on the findings, the assessment committee will then submit a proposal to the assessment council. This will include the areas considered and will also list the key strengths and the main areas for improvement, for the current and future programmes. The proposal could be to accredit the curriculum group of the Academy for a period of six or three years, or to withhold accreditation.

The procedure for the accreditation of a study programme group is based on the regulation *Procedure for Accreditation of Curriculum Groups of Vocational Education and Training* as approved by the Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education

The aim of the assessment team was the evaluation of the following Study Programme Groups (SPG):

Internal Security, and Business and Administration (higher education);

Protection of Property and Persons (vocational education) at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences.

The team was asked to consider the study programmes within each of the study programme groups, and the instruction provided, and assess their conformity with legislation and national and international standards. The team were also asked to provide recommendations on matters such as the assessment of the level of the corresponding theoretical and practical instruction, the research and pedagogical qualification of the teaching staff and research staff, and the sufficiency of teaching resources.

The following persons formed the assessment team:

<b>Robin Bryant (Chair)</b>	Professor, Canterbury Christ Church University; UK
<b>Häli Allas</b>	Planning Division of Rescue work Department; Estonia
<b>Kätlin Alvela</b>	Head of the Prevention and Offences Proceedings Bureau, Police and Border Guard Board; Estonia
<b>Natalja Gurviťš</b>	Associated professor, Tallinn University of Technology; Estonia
<b>Liina Hirv</b>	Student, University of Tartu; Estonia
<b>Raini Jõks</b>	Governor, prison of Tartu; Estonia
<b>Hannu Kiehelä</b>	Director, Training institute of Prison and Probation Services; Finland
<b>Valdas Krulikauskas</b>	Chief of Fire Fighters Training School of the Fire and Rescue Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania; Lithuania
<b>Daiga Kupcane</b>	Chief of Education coordination section, State Border Guard College of the Republic of Latvia; Latvia
<b>Anneli Külaots</b>	Counsellor to the Deputy Director General of the Estonian Emergency Response Centre; Estonia

The assessment process was coordinated by Hillar Bauman and Marge Kroonmäe (EKKA).

After the preparation phase, the assessment team began their work in Estonia on Monday, September 19, 2016. EKKA, the Estonian Quality assurance organization for higher and vocational education provided an introduction to the Higher and Vocational Education System and to the assessment procedure. The members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss. The distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment team was organised and the detailed schedule of the site visits agreed.

During the following days, meetings were held with the representatives of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (September 20-22). In all cases, the schedule for discussion on site for each of the various study programmes only allowed for short time slots for team members to exchange information, discuss conclusions and implications for further questions. On Friday, September 23, the team held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report was agreed, and the findings of team meetings were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report. This work was executed in a cooperative way and the members of the team had detailed discussions and expressed their individual views on the relevant topics. In the following two sections of this report, the assessment team present a summary of their general findings, conclusions and recommendations which are relevant across the entire SPG under review. The team provides an external and objective perspective on the programmes and the contexts within which they are delivered. The intention is to provide constructive comment and critique which may form the basis upon which improvements in the quality of the programmes may be achieved. Judgements are based upon evidence, made available to the assessment team through various means including the written self-evaluation of the Academy, statistics concerning student progression and interviews with staff and students. For the sake of brevity, the following abbreviations are used to indicate the source of evidence used to substantiate claims and recommendations:

Key to evidence

E: interviews with employers and Agencies

M: interviews with management staff

R: inspection of resources (e.g. library visit, visit to training sites)

S: evidence from interviews with students

SD: self-assessment document

T: interviews with teachers and lecturers

The assessment team submits a proposal to the Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education: to accredit the curriculum group of vocational education of the school for six (6) years; to accredit the curriculum group for three (3) years; or not to accredit the curriculum group on the areas of assessment. The proposal will include the key strengths and main areas for improvement of current and future views.

# 1. Assessment report of SPG-s at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences

## 1.1. Introduction

The EASS is an institution of professional higher education within the administration of the Ministry of the Interior (MoI). It offers education in the area of internal security as vocational education, higher education and at Master's level. At the Academy, continuing education is also offered, and research and development activities are carried out in the areas that are important for the development of internal security.

On April 15 1992, the Estonian Academy of Public Safety was founded by the Government of the Republic of Estonia, and was renamed the Estonian National Defence Academy in 1993. The main reason for setting up the Academy was to train police officers who could ensure the safety of society and maintain order. Estonia is a small country and with this in mind, it was decided to broaden the scope of the Academy, and train other specialists and officials of internal security. In addition to the specialities of police and pre-trial investigation, the specialities of corrections, rescue service, customs, defence forces and border guard were also set up. In 1998 the speciality of population management was added, and the College of Administration was created, which included the speciality of customs. In 1999 the Government of the Republic of Estonia decided to terminate the training of military officers at the Academy and transfer it to the new Defence College in Tartu. The same year the speciality of population management was replaced with public administration. The speciality of assistant judge was created in 2001 and in 2002 the speciality of taxation was introduced. In 2004 the Väike-Maarja Rescue School joined the Academy's Rescue College, and the Paikuse Police School joined the Police College. A year later Civil Service Training and Development Centre (hereinafter ATAK) started at the Academy. In 2005 a vocational education programme for prison officers was transferred from Tallinn Pedagogical Seminar to the Academy. In autumn 2006 the Muraste Border Guard School was merged with the Academy's Border Guard College, and a new unit was also created in the structure of the Academy – the Service Dogs Training Centre. Since 2010 there have been four colleges in the Academy: the Financial College (FC), the College of Justice (CJ), the Rescue College (RC) and the Police and Border Guard College (PBGC). Among the new units created were also the Internal Security Institute (which organises the Master's programme), the Centre for Innovative Applied Learning Technologies (CIALT) (which merged with the new Department of Development in 2016), and EASS's Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) (based on the Estonian Nation Contact Point for the European Migration Network), whose activities were transferred to Tallinn University in 2015. The same year also ATAK was closed and the Ministry of Finance took responsibility for training public servants. The Centre for Legal and Social Sciences (CLSS), which was created based on the Centre for General Subjects was merged with the Internal Security Institute in 2016. Continuing education is coordinated by the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE).

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<b>Curriculum group</b>	<b>Level of education</b>	<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>Structural unit that organises learning</b>
Internal Security	Professional higher education	Police Service	Police and Border Guard College
		Rescue Service	Rescue College
		Corrections	College of Justice
	Master's programme	Internal Security	Internal Security Institute
Business and administration	Professional higher education	Taxation and Customs	Financial College
		Customs and Taxation	
Protection of property and persons	Vocational education	Patrol Police Officer	Police and Border Guard College
		Border Guard Officer	
		Rescue Unit Leader	Rescue College
		Rescuer	
		Dispatcher	
		Prison Officer	College of Justice



Assessment Report on Life Sciences

*Number of students on the level of professional higher education 2013-2015*

<b>Name of the college/curriculum</b>	<b>13/14</b>	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>
<b>Internal Security Institute</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>99</b>
Curriculum of the Master of Internal Security	92	99	99
<b>Financial College</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>131</b>
Customs and Taxation	-	40	77
Taxation and Customs	165	115	54
<b>College of Justice</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>83</b>
Corrections	68	82	83
<b>Police and Border Guard College</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>233</b>
Police Service	241	216	233
Police	65	-	-
<b>Rescue College</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>117</b>
Rescue Service	123	117	117
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>663</b>

*Number of students on the level of vocational education 2013-2015*

<b>Name of the college/curriculum</b>	<b>13/14</b>	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>
<b>College of Justice</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>75</b>
Prison Officer	112	94	75
<b>Police and Border Guard College</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>51</b>
Police Officer	39	49	-
Patrol Police Officer	-	-	26
Border Guard	31	29	25
<b>Rescue College</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>93</b>
Dispatcher	20	20	20
Rescue Unit Leader	-	18	14
Rescuer	97	110	59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>219</b>

## 1.2. General findings and recommendations at the study programme groups level

### **Comments**

The team were impressed with the dynamism, enthusiasm and dedication of all the staff of the Academy, from the Rector, Vice Rectors, from the teaching staff, from the support staff such as the library but most importantly of all, from the students themselves. The Academy can be justifiably proud of their staff and students. The Academy undoubtedly has very ambitious plans for the future in terms of curriculum development, research, new resources and exploiting new opportunities. The Academy has made major advances in the last few years in terms of distant and part-time learning, and particularly so in terms of in-service training.

There were many strengths that we observed but inevitably, in an organisation as complex and important as the Academy there is scope for yet further improvement. In many ways the strengths and weaknesses arise from the same sources. The Academy is to be complimented on its ambition and its initiation of a number of very important developments. Doubling the number of publications from Academy staff is an example of an ambitious target, as is the target number of staff who will gain PhDs. Academic staff however, were not always clear about how this was to be achieved, and what entitlement they had in terms of research time. Likewise, the new integrated curriculum is an exciting and very important development and we found almost universal support for the concept. However, we also sensed that there is further scope for involvement of the staff and other agencies in suggesting new courses and helping put together the detail of the existing ones. The Academy are also embarking on a major reconfiguration of its building stock by selling one of its education and training venues and consolidating on the two others. We can see that this makes good sense on a number of levels, including the ability to exploit new technology for student learning and further consolidate academic and professional standards. It will certainly assist in a very tangible way in encouraging inter-service cooperation between, police, border guards, corrections staff and others. However, we did feel that the vision behind these changes could be better communicated to staff and students, for example through a regular newsletter or bulletin. Some staff remain confused over why, for example, the most modern facility will close.

The programmes that you offer are not simply an academic experience for students but are vitally important training and preparation for key security functions of the state. We found excellent examples of theory and practice being integrated both in the classroom and with the internships. However, more work in this area might be needed, particularly in terms of deeper professional involvement from the Agencies involved.

### **Strengths**

The team identified the following strengths (sources of evidence are given at the end of each statement).

1. The students were highly motivated and committed, and willing and able to provide feedback. They had a clear sense of what they wished to learn and to achieve across the VET and HE parts of the curriculum. There was a clear understanding of progression opportunities (S).
2. The teaching staff also had relevant and recent practical experience of the fields concerned. At the higher education level the teachers were also very well qualified in their subject areas (SD, T).
3. Resources were excellent e.g. simulators, practical cells for corrections, equipment, e-learning facilities (R).
4. Programme development was good e.g. the new integrated curriculum (S, SD, T).
5. There was improved cooperation with Agencies and support through the Boards. For example, the Rescue Board showed excellent cooperation with programmes, as with the Prisons, Tax and Customs Boards. Initiatives for new developments often came from Boards and this was a significant strength (E).
6. The e-learning and e-environment was good and the arrangements for internships was innovative and effective. The teaching methods at all levels were up-to-date, and we are confident that this will continue (E, M, R, S, T).
7. The introduction of distance learning education and training for in-service training (border guards, police and other professions) is a significant and important development (E, M, S, T).

### **Areas for improvement**

The team identified the following areas for improvement (sources of evidence are given at the end of each statement).

1. The strategy for recruiting students to the Academy with foreign language ability, particularly Russian and English, needs to be reviewed to order increase the number entering with these capabilities (M, SD, T).
2. The communication of the Academy's HR strategy for staff appeared unclear, for example in terms of entitlement to resources and continuing education (T).

3. There was a lack of some staff involvement in programme development e.g. in terms of early involvement with the design of the new integrated curriculum; the incorporation of e-learning (T).
4. Increase the awareness amongst staff of both the need for personal research and scholarship and to clarify and promote the support offered by the Academy to undertake these activities (M, T).
5. Software for the detection of plagiarism employed by the Academy (but supplied by the external organisation, HITSA) appeared to be only available for texts written in Estonian, and not, for example in English and Russian (S, T).

### **Recommendations**

The team makes the following recommendations to the Academy:

1. Continue to integrate more the teaching of foreign languages (particularly Russian and English) within the curriculum (E,S,T).
2. Ensure consistency across all programmes in relation to funding the accommodation, sustenance and other services for students (M, S).
3. Allocate the workload of teaching staff more fairly and transparently, particularly in terms of research to teaching load ratios and entitlement to continuing education (T).
4. Revise policies for academic misdemeanours. The policy in relation to plagiarism needs to be revised in consultation with the Boards, and made known to all teaching staff and others involved in student assessment (E,SD,S,T).
5. Increase the number of online full text journals available to both students and staff at the Academy. (Although the inter-library loan system works well it appears to be necessary in a significant number of cases) (R).
6. Communication with staff (both academic and support staff) concerning the consolidation on a smaller number of sites could be improved (T).

### **Proposal to the Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education:**

**To accredit the curriculum group of vocational education of the Academy for six (6) years.**

## 1.3. Strengths and areas for improvement of study programmes by assessment areas

### 1.3.1. Police Service (Prof HE); Patrol Police Officer (VET); Border Guard Officer (VET)

#### **Study programme and study programme development**

##### Standards

- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and Standard of Vocational Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

##### **Comments**

The study programmes of the area of Police (HE, vocational) and Border Guard (vocational) comply with regulations, legal acts, occupational standard (for BG officer) and FRONTEX Common core curriculum –EU border guard basic training, requirements of international legislation regulating the profession, taking into consideration descriptions of the competencies of the main duties presented by PBGB, the main trends in European higher education policy as well as the needs of internal security.

There is a strong correspondence between the overall curriculum of the area of Police and Border Guard in action and the main goals and development activities of EASS. Graduation requirements are fully met.

Development of study programmes are dynamic, innovative, based on changes in EASS, PBGB, changes in educational policy, as well as the results of feedbacks from alumni, employers, students and lecturers are taken into account. In the development of study programmes representatives of the MoI, PBGB, EASS have been involved in the process of development of new curricula and updating the existing ones. It means that the study programmes have been structured according

to the competencies of the main tasks of the PBGB, they are up-to-dated according to real situation in the security field.

It is clear that the study programmes support cadets' general competencies - foreign language skills (by introducing elective modules in English and Russian) and lifelong learning skills (IT, official language, communication).

BG study programme have been evaluated internationally by FRONTEX (2014). The integration of the learning outcomes of the common core curriculum for the basic-level border guard training in the EU into the curriculum for border guard officers was evaluated, and the knowledge and attitudes of the graduates from the border guard basic training. The good results of students of the PBGC (average 76%) show that students are well prepared for interoperability in BG field in EU level, and ready to collaborate with other EU border-guards at different missions, joint operations and cross border activities.

Much effort is put on filling the possible workforce gap in the PGBG (the programme for preliminary internal security in general schools; possibility for the applicants to pass before the main period of entering exams at PBGC; curricula for continuing education; opportunity for APEL).

### **Strengths**

- Employers have been fully involved in developing, updating and implementing the study programmes (HE, vocational) (E).
- There is excellent internship organisation, which is well-structured and monitored (E,M,S,T).
- Good integration of subject content and foreign language acquisition (S,T).
- Student feedback is used consistently and effectively in the development of the programme (for example, a practical component has now been introduced to the final examination for VET) (S,T).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- Foreign language prerequisites for student admission to be considered but only introduced if there is no detrimental effect on recruitment (E,M,T).
- Improve the awareness of the foreign language courses currently offered to both teaching staff and students, and consider increasing the flexibility of the provision (S,T).
- Strengthening the international aspect of the programmes, for example through attracting more visiting lecturers, participation in Erasmus programs (S,T).
- Attracting more practitioners to contribute to the practical aspects of the programme (e.g. criminology) (E,M,S,T).

## **Resources**

### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

### Comments

The resources are appropriate at all locations (the learning facilities of EASS are located in two places-Muraste and Paikuse) for specific, tactical and practical training for border guard and police education: auditoria, simulation classrooms, classrooms equipped for document control, criminalistics classroom and interrogation (interview) classroom, classroom for sea rescue, gyms, wrestling/mat rooms, fitness studios, shooting ranges (in both locations there are indoor shooting ranges), outdoor shooting range, inspection facility, practice border, driving practice area, buildings modified for tactical exercises. In summary, there is sufficient adequacy of facilities for practical training.

There is a danger that the movement of the Muraste facilities to Tallinn (Kase Street) might cause the lack of practice border section (border simulator), and the implementation of practical training for border guards in period 2017-2019 will need to be carefully monitored by the Academy.

There are libraries, canteens, dormitories, repair shops for mending the vehicles used in the study process and other important administrative buildings in Muraste and Paikuse. In every room used for studies, there is a computer set and a data projector; lecturers have laptops.

Students can access the PBGB's intranet and the training environments for the information systems (MIS, OPIS, KAIRI) from the computer labs.

The EASS receives its funding from the state budget and the Ministry of the Interior. The division of financial instruments is based on the goals stated in the EASS Development Plan and its main activities. All daytime students have free accommodation and free catering and free uniforms, service weapons and specialist equipment.

### Strengths

- Use of the same kind of equipment in teaching and learning that is used on a daily basis by the PBGB (E, R).
- Use of e-learning methods and environment (R).
- Effective use of funding (M, T).
- Financial support for students (M, S).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- There is a lack of new specialist textbooks in some areas (police tactics) and specialist learning materials (vehicle check) (R).
- Consider extending the ability of the teaching staff to utilise genuine police and border guard information systems (R,T).
- Although there is sufficient learning/training materials and resources needed for studies, there is still need for the support from PBGB to provide EASS with teaching resources and equipment for police/border guard/criminalistics learning (E,R).
- E-courses and e-learning materials should be prepared together with specialists from the PBGB and should be shared on PBGB 's Intranet (E,R, T).

### **Teaching and learning**

#### Standards

- ✓ The organisation and development of study and teaching process supports the achievement of the goals of curricula (organisation and assessment of teaching organisation, incl. work practice and practical work in the study environment; supporting integration with teaching organisation; online studies; granting professions and the relevance and application of documentation).
- ✓ Implementing and developing the study and teaching process supports the development of students in attaining the learning outcomes provided in the standard of vocational education (study methods based on learning outcomes and the needs and characteristics of learners; integrating, developing and assessing key and professional competencies; results related to the development of students; etc.)
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development. The support system and its development supports the student (supporting the student's learning capabilities, development of reflexive and social capabilities; supporting students with special educational needs, incl. a support system for students with learning and behavioural difficulties; supporting adult students; and analysing the development of students, using individual studies where necessary.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.



- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

### **Comments**

Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected: as more than 50% of vocational training consists of practical tasks and internships, a large proportion of practical lessons are carried out in smaller groups – thus the lecturer has more time for each cadet.

Different learning methods (lecture, seminar, practical tasks, CLIL, simulations, group work) and assessment criteria are used in the study process in attaining the learning outcomes, for example, simulated situations of the interrogator's behaviour, practical lessons on stopping of vehicles, communication in English, detection of a violation, carrying out proceedings. Simulation environments are used (inspection facility, practice border) for coordinating different situations connected with crisis management and patrol activities.

Requirements for individual work and types of individual tasks are versatile and introduced at the beginning of every subject/topic.

There are different types of practical tasks, starting from filling in documents and ending with role plays concerning life-like situations (e.g. in the tactics facility, the students learn to implement the rules of security tactics: entering a building, passing corners etc.). Practical lessons are carried out also in a realistic work environment which helps to relate the knowledge acquired at school with the real police and border guard work (e.g. participating in searches for missing people and police operations, securing public events, carrying out people and vehicle checks in the Port of Tallinn). Cadets have been involved in the PBGB's tactical exercises.

The EASS provides the opportunity for the PBGC students to participate in the short time mobility Scheme (there was good feedback from cadets on this issue). There is, however, a need to create opportunities for longer term mobility within the new curriculum (for example, through adding a corresponding module into the curriculum).

### **Strengths**

- Assessment criteria are transparent and clear to students (S,T).
- The internship is well organized and supervised in cooperation with the PBGB in various regions of Estonia (E, S, T).

- There is very good cooperation with employers in choosing topics for the graduation theses, in preparing tasks for the exam, in participation with the committees for the assessment of final examinations and the defence of graduation thesis (E, S, T).
- The 'digi team' provides excellent help and support (M, R, S, T).
- There are many practical examples provided during study (S, T).
- There is early and effective assimilation into the police organization (E, S).
- Good use is made of contemporary teaching methods (e-courses, CLIL) (S, T).

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The students' involvement in research has been patchy with not all participating in PBGB and EASS research activities. We would suggest that EASS organise student research conferences and invite other security studies students and IoM representatives (who are undertaking their Masters studies) to present their research in the field. The best papers presented could be used as the basis of future training material (E, S, T).
- Consider providing more elective subjects related to future positions for VET (E, M, S).
- If possible, there should be a longer introductory internship for VET (within the constraints of a 18 month programme) (S).

### **Teaching staff**

#### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Development and support of staff are based on the current and future needs of the curriculum group (self-evaluation of staff; conformity of in-service training to needs; effectiveness of training; methodological and education technology support for teachers; taking results of staff development into account in teaching; etc).
- ✓ Lecturers and teachers systematically develop themselves and their teaching skills.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

## Comments

We can confirm that the number of staff lecturers and non-staff lecturers as well as their specialist education, qualification and professional experience in the field ensures the quality of achieving learning outcomes and teaching within the police/border guard programmes (vocational, HE).

The teaching staff systematically develop themselves and their teaching skills, by undertaking Master/Doctoral studies, having and attending appropriate training (according to training needs analysis, annual interviews, lecturers' evaluations, feedbacks), also organised by the PBGB, undertaking PBGB's internships and participating in international activities (FRONTEX, CEPOL). The latter activities keep lecturers well informed of new developments, current topics in their area and let them bring new knowledge and skills into the learning process.

The teaching staff is very open to cooperation with MoI, PBGB, Tax and Customs Board, Forensic Science Institute, other lecturers and employees of the EASS, representatives of the agencies, lecturers of partner schools by involving them in practical trainings, developing the cases for the final examination, compiling learning materials and tools, organising seminars on actual topics.

## **Strengths**

- The involvement of the practitioners of the PBGB in the teaching activities of the College is an example of good practice (E, S).
- Good cooperation between teachers and students (S,T).
- Teachers' involvement in study-related various projects in order to develop specific training materials (e.g. language dictionaries)(R, T).
- Good quality e-courses developed by teachers and learning materials for Moodle (R).

## **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- Greater rotation of teachers and lecturers with the PBGB (M, T).
- More involvement by teachers in maintaining knowledge of current developments in their subject areas e.g. through scholarship activities (M, T).
- There is need to motivate lecturers to undertake research (applied research), to participate in international conferences in the field and to publish articles in recognized research/scientific journals/data bases (T).

## **Students**

### Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

### Comments

Student places are filled with capable students, but during the last few years there have been problems in recruiting suitable students to undertake border guard officers studies. The reasons why students do not complete the recruitment process successfully include deficiencies in the Estonian language, and for police officer training, poor performance at interview. However, the number of students who discontinue their studies and dropout from the programme is low.

There is evidence of good levels of students engagement with the processes and mechanisms that underlie the successful running of the programme (different types of feedback, an active Student Council etc.).

In order to support the students whose first language is not Estonian there has been an elective module of the Estonian language, with a credit value of 5 ECVET, added into the vocational education curricula. For the 2016 admission the number of credits was raised to 6 ECVETs.

### Strengths

- Qualified students, highly interested in their programmes (S).
- Students are highly motivated to work with the PBGB after graduation (E, S).
- Students are clear about possible career pathways after graduation (S, T).
- Joint activities with PGBG such as working on patrol and other professional training during study (E, S, T).
- Every graduate (police/border guard vocational/HE programme) is granted a position at the PBGB (E, M, S).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- Lack of student mobility e.g. through Erasmus (M, S).

### **1.3.2. Rescue Service (Prof HE); Rescue Unit Leader (VET); Rescuer (VET); Dispatcher (VET)**

#### **Study programme and study programme development**

- ✓ Standards
- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and Standard of Vocational education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

#### **Comments**

The quality of study programmes are ensured by close cooperation between the Rescue Board, ERC and students and academic staff – for example, they all are represented in the Rescue College Council. The Rescue College (RC) curricula are effectively evaluated by the College every year and feedback from students, academic staff and employers is taken into account.

The curricula study programmes (Rescue Service (Prof HE), Rescuer (VET), Rescue Unit Leader (VET) and Dispatcher (VET)) correspond to the requirements set by legal acts, higher educational and vocational education standards and also with the professional standards. The study programmes are developed continuously by considering the development needs of the Rescue Board and the ERC.

The Rescuer (VET) and Rescue Unit Leader (VET) study programmes complement each other. The Rescue College have made several changes in order to minimize the duplication and increase the compliance of the curricula to the needs and expectations of the employer and students. Since 2015 the vocational curricula of

rescuer and rescue unit leader have been developed on the basis of a logical sequence. In addition to the already existing Dispatcher study programme a new study programme of Rescue Organizer is being developed to replace the on-site training of Rescue Organizers, which at present is arranged at the ERC.

It would be fair to note that the changes to the programmes, both of Prof. HE and VET, are relatively new, so the opinions expressed during the interviews were partly based on perception rather than experience. More evidence-based comparisons regarding the new study programmes for Rescuer (VET), Rescue Unit Leader (VET) and Rescue Service (Prof HE) can be made after some years when graduates of the new study programmes will have entered the service/labour market.

### **Strengths**

- In the EASS are good conditions in which to perform incremental training i.e. in the same location there is a possibility to obtain vocational and higher education, thus the continuation is ensured. For example: Rescue College (RC) is part of EASS, Rescue School (RS) is part of Rescue College (RC) (E, M, R).
- The RC is flexible when reacting and has a close cooperation with the employers from Rescue Board and Emergency Response Centre; is flexible when developing training programmes and considers the employers' wishes and position in labour market (SD, E, M).
- After improving Firefighter-Rescuers' Training Programme to Rescuers' Training Programme there appeared a possibility to give the largest amount of time to the main subjects with a possibility to choose elective subjects under the specialization. This creates favourable conditions for students to choose from a number of vocational directions (SD, M, S, T).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- It is recommended to consider negotiating with the employers a period of work before Rescuer (VET) and Rescue Unit Leader (VET) studies so that prospective students can make an informed decision to start with 'Rescuer' or continue with Rescue Unit Leader education and training based on real work experience in a rescue unit. For that reason it is advisable to carry out an analysis to determine the adequate length of a mandatory period of real work experience (E, M, S, T).
- It appeared from the discussions that the actual choice of electives for Rescue Service (Prof HE) is limited by the number of interested students (although it is acknowledged that the same observation could also be made concerning other Academy provision). Namely, if there are too few interested students the course is considered not to be viable. There is, however, some intention to cooperate with other HE institutions in order to recruit more students and thus widen the choice of electives. It is important that the proposal be put into practice and cooperation be actually established, e.g. with Tallinn University of Technology (SD, M, S).

## Resources

### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

### Comments

The Rescue College is located in two locations. In Tallinn there is located the Rescue Service (HE) and Dispatcher (VET) facility and in Väike-Maarja the Rescuer and Rescue Unit Leader (VET) facilities. It became evident that complicated logistics does not pose problems for students or lecturers.

The learning environment is modern and equipment (libraries, dormitories, catering, accommodation etc.) has received mainly good feedback from students. Practical training opportunities are good and innovative with virtual simulation environment in the instruction.

A new building with improved facilities is going to be built by 2019.

Study materials are contributed by the lecturers and e-learning environments employed in instruction include SIS and Moodle.

### Strengths

- The Väike-Maarja VET training facility for practical exercises is well-equipped and offers various activities simulating 'true-to-life' rescue work. It offers multiple sites imitating emergency situations and is being constantly developed (M, R).
- The Rescuer's (VET) equipment of the Väike-Maarja school is kept up-to-date. Thanks to the excellent cooperation with the Rescue Board it is possible for the College to receive samples of new equipment procured for professional rescue units. In that way the graduates are well prepared to enter their professional life (E, M, R).
- A virtual simulation environment has been created for the Rescue Service (Prof HE) and (Rescuer (VET)) and Rescue Unit Leader (VET) for practicing and evaluating the decisions made during the (virtual) incidents (R).
- The Dispatcher (VET) simulation facility allows cadets to practice emergency call processing in an environment close to reality (R).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- It is recommended that the development plans for the Dispatchers (VET) simulation facility for practicing emergency call processing be implemented so that the facility resembles the real working environment and equipment as closely as possible (SD, M, R).
- It is advisable to monitor the development plans for the fire safety laboratory (Prof HE) as the practical exercises facility needs upgrading. According to the information received, the new building of the Academy is expected to include a new laboratory (SD, M, R).

### **Teaching and learning**

#### Standards

- ✓ The organisation and development of study and teaching process supports the achievement of the goals of curricula (organisation and assessment of teaching organisation, incl. work practice and practical work in the study environment; supporting integration with teaching organisation; online studies; granting professions and the relevance and application of documentation).
- ✓ Implementing and developing the study and teaching process supports the development of students in attaining the learning outcomes provided in the standard of vocational education (study methods based on learning outcomes and the needs and characteristics of learners; integrating, developing and assessing key and professional competencies; results related to the development of students; etc.)
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development. The support system and its development supports the student (supporting the student's learning capabilities, development of reflexive and social capabilities; supporting students with special educational needs, incl. a support system for students with learning and behavioural difficulties; supporting adult students; and analysing the development of students, using individual studies where necessary.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.



## **Comments**

The instruction in vocational training is closely connected with the employers in order to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs and requirements of the students' future position(s).

The key principle underpinning instruction is to move from theory to practice and thus the lecture topics alternate with practical exercises. In the practical tasks the same technical equipment is employed by students as used at their future workplace.

The participation of the lecturers in the working groups of the Rescue Board and ERC ensures the implementation of new policy and practice during teaching.

The internship forms 15% of the period of studies in higher education and approximately 50% of the vocational education. The internship is conducted either within a dedicated unit of the Rescue Board or the ERC. The internship is completed with a 'defence' of the internship report before a committee including a representative of the employer and the lecturers, the head of the department and the internship coordinator.

The summative assessment evaluates the development of occupational competence defined in the curriculum and the acquisition of the competences described in the professional standard.

The evaluation of practical tasks also includes non-staff lecturers working for the Rescue Board or the ERC who thus have the competence to assess the students' skills and knowledge on the basis of real rescue incidents.

In order to provide a better overview of the content, purpose and form of internship for representatives of the employer, the EASS has conducted training for internship supervisors.

## **Strengths**

- ERC dispatchers' training is organized in a manner that makes it as similar to real situations as possible (SD, R, T).
- Modern technologies are used in the teaching process. Especially good conditions are created for effective operational management skills development (R, S).
- Students who finish their studies evaluate the training atmosphere as positive and very conducive to learning (SD, S).
- The lecturers concerned work in cooperation with other colleagues within the College and from other Colleges of the Academy. The lecturers of various departments are included in joint classes, workgroups and study groups, which help to ensure that the teaching staff are aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues (M, T).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- The process of writing Rescue Service (HE) graduation theses requires further analysis and improvement, as many of the students do not complete their theses on time. The stages of thesis writing and the subjects related to research methodology need more efficient synchronisation in order to provide mutual connection and support. It is also possible that the time of the internship period in the final year needs reconsideration (E, M, SD, S).
- The internship experience of Rescuer (VET), Rescue Unit Leader (VET) cadets and Rescue Service (Prof HE) cadets varies and in some cases the internship does not seem to have met the purpose. It would be useful to carry out an analysis to examine the issues involved, pinpoint the reasons and suggest steps to be taken (S).
- It appears that Rescue (VET) and Rescue Unit Leader (VET) cadets have restrictions in their choice of electives and the choice depends on the region and specialization of the unit they are based with. It is recommended to introduce more flexibility into the process. Consideration should also be given for the opportunity of cadets to attend optional courses at the Academy (SD, S).
- It is advisable to look deeper into the reasons why a proportion of students do not write their final thesis within the prescribed period and consider solutions (SD, M).
- The final exercise for Rescuers (VET) and Rescue Unit Leader (VET) is held twice a year, but only one group (graduating in June) has a possibility to undertake international exercise experience, outside of Estonia. The EASS should attempt to offer the same opportunity for all students (SD, M).
- It is advisable to continue to monitor the study program coordination of Rescuers (VET) and Rescue Unit Leader (VET). A shortened curriculum does not leave room for much flexibility, which is needed in some cases during the practical studies (SD, M).

### **Teaching staff**

#### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Development and support of staff are based on the current and future needs of the curriculum group (self-evaluation of staff; conformity of in-service training to needs; effectiveness of training; methodological and education technology support for teachers; taking results of staff development into account in teaching; etc.
- ✓ Lecturers and teachers systematically develop themselves and their teaching skills.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and

- practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
  - ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

### **Comments**

Rescue College lecturers are highly qualified with extensive experience, who improve their subject knowledge not only in EASS but also within other educational institutions of Estonia and abroad including in the UK, Denmark and Finland. However, not all lecturers have the same opportunities to do so. The lecturers who provide sessions for vocational and higher education students have a high workload and do not appear to have many opportunities to participate in these training courses.

The number of non-staff lecturers is relatively high, especially in vocational education, although their contribution to the overall programme is relatively small. The non-staff lecturers mainly include the employees of the Rescue Board or the ERC who are the leading experts of their field. Non-staff lecturers are involved in higher education to teach subjects that are either relatively small modules or for which the Rescue College has no qualified staff. In vocational education, the non-staff lecturers mainly teach practical subjects so that the students' skills are developed to meet the needs of their future jobs.

The lecturers have also contributed to the publication of study materials.

Lecturers of Rescue College have the opportunity to gain work experience at the employers to update their professional skills.

### **Strengths**

- There are qualified lecturers and teachers capable of delivering the goals of the curriculum. Most of non-staff lecturers from the Rescue Board or the Emergency Response Centre are experts from the field thus ensure the up-to-date knowledge from the field (E, SD, T).
- The Rescue Service (Prof HE) lecturers are satisfied with the possibilities to upgrade their skills and undertake research (T).
- The employers are highly appreciative of teaching staff that work at the Rescue College (E).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- The high workload (more precisely the amount of mandatory contact lessons) has an impact on the VET teachers opportunities to upgrade their skills, including pedagogical as well as specialized subject related skills. It is recommended that the College examines the options available to strike a fair balance between classroom workload and the need for upgrading skills (M, T).

## Students

### Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

### Comments

Up to 2012, there was an open admission competition for Rescuers and Rescue Unit Leaders programme. This resulted in a situation where in some rescue stations there was a lack of workforce and vice versa – there were more people wishing to find a job than the Rescue Board could offer. In cooperation with the Rescue Board, it was decided in 2013 to switch to institutional referrals. The latter allows the Rescue Board to make more optimal plans concerning the training of new staff for local units. When enrolled at the Rescue College, the students are already familiar with their future workplace thus allowing them to evaluate their suitability for the position. Since 2015, Rescue Unit Leaders have been taught in accordance with a continuing education curriculum requiring the prior completion of the curriculum for Rescuers and work experience in a rescue institution. The transition to the continuing education curriculum allowed the College to reduce the time needed for completing the curriculum by half.

The vocational studies of Dispatcher, however, exhibit the reverse trends. Since 2011, the studies have been based on institutional referral, whereas in the academic year 2016/2017 the students will be enrolled on the basis of open competition.

In all curricula (except for the continuing education of the Rescue Unit Leader), students may choose electives or optional subjects. As the number of students

and study groups in professional higher education is small, the students cannot always take the electives that have been advertised as there may not be enough students to make the course economically viable.

The students are generally satisfied with the content and organisation of studies and generally satisfied with the support services provided. The students of vocational education are satisfied with the general environment in Väike-Maarja as students are provided accommodation in the comfortable halls of residence, the sustenance is good and there are good sports facilities.

The Rescue College has multiple international partners, which gives an opportunity for cadets to attend practical training abroad and students have annually participated in long-term mobility programmes (e.g. the Erasmus program).

### **Strengths**

- Comparing EASS to other Estonian training institutions the students of EASS Rescue College have particularly good training conditions (accommodation, board, clothing, scholarship) and their job is guaranteed (R, S).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- The Rescue College have a limited number of applicants to select from. It would be advisable to analyse the reasons and suggest measures to attract larger amount of students and thus have more competition (M, SD, T).
- A significant number of students of the Rescue Service (HE) curriculum do not graduate from the College within the prescribed timespan. It would be advisable to look deeper into the reasons for that and take some measures accordingly (SD, M, T).
- The recruiting process can be improved by closer cooperation between employers and Rescue College (E, M).

### **1.3.3. Corrections (Prof HE); Prison Officer (VET)**

#### **Study programme and study programme development**

- ✓ Standards
- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and Standard of Vocational Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality

- is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
  - ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
  - ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
  - ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

### **Comments**

The study programme for Corrections (Prof HE) is in accordance with the Professional Higher Education Standard and the qualification framework, meaning that students graduating the programme will meet the requirements for class II prison inspectors. The VET study programme for prison officers meets the Vocational Education Standard and the qualification framework by meeting the requirements for class II prison officials.

Both study programmes have been amended several times since the academic year 2012/2013. Changes mostly base on the feedback and are made in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, Prison Service, Ministry of Justice, lecturers and students. In both study programmes, much effort is put on the internship – the capacity seems to be sufficient, the organization and assessment of the internship is thorough.

### **Strengths**

- There is a very good cooperation between the College and the Prison Service, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice in developing the curricula. Very good examples are, that the Director of the College is involved in prison directors' meeting; that the Ministry of Justice forwards relevant information regarding the area directly to the College; there is a survey among employers carried through every second year (E, M, T).
- The internship is well organized and thought through, much effort has been put to prepare the students before the internship (E, M, S, T).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- The self-evaluation brought out two important problems: generic skills and legal capability. The problem of generic skills is already being addressed by the College, but the low legal capability is not (SD, M).

## **Resources**

### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

### Comments

The study activities of the curricula are financed from the general budget of the Academy. The basic equipment appears to be ensured. In addition, the Ministry of Justice has provided a practical facility of practice cells and video learning equipment, telescopic batons, training gases, handcuffs, and training suits necessary for carrying out practical lessons, and a cardiopulmonary resuscitation training manikin.

Many of the learning materials are produced by the lecturers of the EASS and in cooperation with Ministry of Justice and prisons. However, there is lack of relevant learning materials in some subjects.

All cadets of the College of Justice are guaranteed free accommodation during their internship. Board and lodging is free for vocational students, but not for prof. HE students.

### Strengths

- There is a wide range of equipment used in everyday prison work, which enables effective practical learning (E, R).
- Representatives of employers have been involved in compiling and developing the curricula, the students' assessment process, the development of the learning environment, the publishing of textbooks (E, T).

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Some specialist subjects do not have relevant textbooks and learning materials, that would be in accordance with the legal system and the organization of prisons in Estonia (R).
- Prof HE students are not provided with free board and lodging (M).
- The environment for practicing shooting does not meet the requirements for the study process (R).
- Development for distant learning as an optional form of study should be taken into account in the future (E, S).

## Teaching and learning

### Standards

- ✓ The organisation and development of study and teaching process supports the achievement of the goals of curricula (organisation and assessment of teaching organisation, incl. work practice and practical work in the study environment; supporting integration with teaching organisation; online studies; granting professions and the relevance and application of documentation).
- ✓ Implementing and developing the study and teaching process supports the development of students in attaining the learning outcomes provided in the standard of vocational education (study methods based on learning outcomes and the needs and characteristics of learners; integrating, developing and assessing key and professional competencies; results related to the development of students; etc.)
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development. The support system and its development supports the student (supporting the student's learning capabilities, development of reflexive and social capabilities; supporting students with special educational needs, incl. a support system for students with learning and behavioural difficulties; supporting adult students; and analysing the development of students, using individual studies where necessary).
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

### Comments



Speciality subjects have been divided into three larger categories: surveillance, re-socialisation and law. The study process is carried out in groups of 25 – 30 students but in practical training, the groups sizes are smaller. This enables intensive and personal approach in the learning process and supports the development of students in attaining the learning outcomes.

Many different teaching and learning methods are used: lectures, seminars, group work, team work, individual work, presentations, video training, and visits to institutions.

There are monthly meetings to ensure efficient communication between the staff and students and promote discipline, including the issue of academic fraud.

Students of one study group of the speciality of corrections are given an opportunity to learn from distance with the help of video conferencing devices; students give feedback after the end of each subject, feedback is used to develop and amend the curricula. Feedback from employers is collected, in order to map and meet the needs of the profession.

The practical internship in the prisons are well structured, administered and prepared, as there are internship coordinators responsible for it. There is no reason to doubt that the internship and theoretical studies are integrated.

The grade point average of the speciality of corrections has grown (from 3,56 in the academic year 2012/2013 to 3,7 in the academic year 2015/2016), whereas the average grade for final examinations has remained below the aim (which was 3,6 in the academic year 2015/2016; the average being 3,0). This raises a question whether there is a dissonance between what and how is assessed during the studies and in the final exams.

### **Strengths**

- A well-structured and managed internship (E, M, S, T).
- An obligation on students to take elective courses in both curricula (M, S).
- The aim of the final seminar is to prepare a student and to assess the student's readiness for passing the imprisonment-related final examination and to deepen the connections between theoretical studies and practical work (M, S, T).
- Academic fraud (like plagiarism) is taken seriously (M, S, T).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- Difference between the trends on average final exam grade and student average grade throughout the programme, and difficulties with the sub-section of law in the final exam must be addressed. It should be analysed, whether the assessment criteria during the studies differ from the criteria in final examination or whether the teaching methods in the field of law are suitable (SD, T).

- Teaching methods and tools used in teaching should be modern, effective and support the development of a 'digital learning culture'. At present digital learning (e-learning) material is not available for all modules (R, S).
- Up until Spring 2016 vocational students could only take the assessments of the modules three times, but only once the final examination (as the students of higher education). New arrangements have alleviated this situation but the new policy needs to be communicated more clearly to staff and students (M, SD, T).
- The assessment and the assessment criteria of the final examination need clearer wording (R).

## Teaching staff

### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Development and support of staff are based on the current and future needs of the curriculum group (self-evaluation of staff; conformity of in-service training to needs; effectiveness of training; methodological and education technology support for teachers; taking results of staff development into account in teaching; etc.
- ✓ Lecturers and teachers systematically develop themselves and their teaching skills.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

### Comments

There are 10 staff lecturers teaching speciality subjects, eight of them have master's degree and three are pursuing for doctoral studies. One-third of the lecturers are alumni of the Collage, eight of the 10 staff lecturers have previous experience in working in prison. Attention is also paid on engaging younger generation lecturers. More specific subjects are taught by non-staff lecturers (for

example fire arm-related subjects, law) and in the academic year 2015/2016, there were 13 non-staff lecturers.

A mentor is appointed to every new lecturer and they have a smaller working load in the first teaching year. In-service training is provided by the Academy and also, the lecturers can participate in trainings organized by the Prison Service. Internship in prison is also provided for the lecturers.

As a supportive mechanism, a seminar is well organized, which is a good opportunity for lecturers to share good practice.

Lecturers' efficiency is assessed via student feedback, during annual interviews, through formal evaluation of lecturers and the lesson observations carried out by teachers and the Head of Department.

The lecturers of the College participate in international training events and cooperation projects, also teach internationally in different countries.

### **Strengths**

- High levels of student satisfaction with the programme(s) (S).
- Most of the lecturers, both staff and non-staff lecturers, are also practitioners and active on the field (T).
- There is the possibility to take part of the in-service training organized by the Prison Service and to carry out an internship (E, M, T).

### **Area of improvement and recommendation**

- New lecturers, whose teaching skills need more development, need to be made more aware, and take advantage of, the supportive activities being provided for developing their teaching skills. (M, T).

### **Students**

#### **Standards**

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

## **Comments**

A significant proportion number of the students are already Prison Service employees – in the academic year 2015/2016, the rate was 69% of the programme for Corrections and over 90% of the VET programme. After graduating the VET programme, some students pursue their studies on the Prof. HE programme. In order to recruit motivated candidates, the College puts much effort into activities aimed at secondary school students (information days, elective course, seminars for teachers and career counsellors etc.). The admission process – an interview - assesses cognitive capabilities and personal characteristics throughout. A 'background check' is also conducted.

The number of applicants for College of Justice has been stable and relatively high (3.7 – 5.9 applicants per one place) and this has enabled it to choose between candidates. The number of the student places on Corrections programme is connected to the number of prospective work places, as every graduate is obliged to work in the Prison Service for three years.

The proportion of graduation in the Prof. HE programme for Corrections is not very stable – in the academic year 2014/2015 it was 40%, but in the academic year 2015/2016, it was 76.6%. Graduation proportion on the VET programme for Prison Officers is higher and more stable – between 70% and 91%. The main reason for discontinuing studies on the programme for Corrections is unsuitability of the speciality, although in the case of VET programme, the reasons vary.

The students of the College of Justice also participate in the Erasmus programme.

## **Strengths**

- Interviews with the students who withdraw their studies are conducted – this gives the College important information (M, T).
- There is close communication between students and lecturers (S, T).
- The system of group leaders and group coordinators offers an efficient way to organize the study process (SD, T).
- Students, who had service connection with the Prison Service, are paid during their studies even though their employment is 'suspended'. Others are paid stipends and there is additional stipend for very good academic performance (E, S).
- The admission rate (number of student places /number of applications) is relatively good in corrections (SD).
- Employers are very satisfied with the graduate students (E).

## **Area of improvement and recommendation**

- There are a high number of discontinuations of study, especially in the HE programme (40% in the academic year 13/14). The reasons for this should be investigated and an action plan agreed (SD, M).

### 1.3.4. Internal Security (Master's)

#### **Study programme and study programme development**

- ✓ Standards
- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

#### **Comments**

There have been some structural changes related to the Master's programme in the Internal Security Institute: the Centre for Legal and Social Subjects (CLSS) was merged with the ISI and research fellows were employed. The reason behind the changes was the employers' interest in research centered cooperation, which was clearly brought out in the employers' questionnaire – which means involving lecturers, experts and MA students of the EASS in the applied research important for the employers.

#### **Strengths**

- Opening up the programme to graduates from non-security disciplines has increased both the pool of students but also the ability for new ideas to be introduced (SD, M, S, T).
- When cooperation with the Agencies is good then the work produced by the students, particularly the thesis, is of immense value to the Agencies in terms of practical solving (E).
- Up-to-date with current concerns, flexible in delivery and tailored in delivery (E, SD, S).

- Teaching staff well qualified (SD, T).
- Teaching and learning strategy is interactive (R, S, T).
- E-learning used particularly well on this programme (R, S).
- Very close cooperation with stakeholders (E).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- The research methods course needs to be revised to ensure sufficient time is allocated and that quantitative methods are covered adequately (SD, S).
- Revise the content of the Master's to increase the optional content e.g. to include counter-terrorism, cultural differences, more specialisation towards defence (E, SD, T).
- Greater involvement by the employers in the identification of subjects for research together with a view of the impact of this research (E, S, T).
- Students find it difficult to balance work with part-time study on the Master's. Perhaps more consideration of time allowance by employers (E, S).
- Consider making the Crisis Management module compulsory (SD, S).

### **Resources**

#### **Standards**

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

### **Comments**

We found the resources to be as described in the self-evaluation document and of a generally high standard (the exception being access to research publications which we note below).

### **Strengths**

- The SIS system is a particular strength as it includes more than simply learning materials – in this way it complements the Moodle (R).
- 3-d virtual technology system innovative and employed well (R, S).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- Increase the availability of specialist software, for example in terms of big data analytics (R).
- Produce own materials in specialist topics in the Estonian language (R).

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Standards**

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

### **Comments**

The self-evaluation report states, that: "Not only practical activities, but also cooperation and internationalization are emphasized in the curriculum". In terms of practical activities, it is important to stress that the Master's students are usually people who work in the area of internal security. Practical activities can be carried out during a subject called *Practical Activities of Internal Security*, which supports students' mobility and enables them to carry out activities related to their MA theses and self-development (conferences, libraries) abroad.

### **Strengths**

- Two supervisors used, one from the Academy and one from the Agency (E, M, S).
- Students are very complimentary on teaching methods employed when compared with other universities (S).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- It is clear that the 'two supervisor' system is not always properly employed (in terms of second supervisor coming from an Agency). It should be reviewed and consistency imposed across the student body (S).
- The plagiarism policy is not consistently understood in terms of the penalties that should be applied and the recording mechanism that should be employed (S, T).
- Monitoring statistics on course completion need to properly reflect true graduation rates e.g. look at drop-out rates over a longer period than the Master's duration (SD, M).
- Considering the security-related challenges Estonia has to face and the country's broad-based approach to security, it is necessary to include also foreign partners. It is recommendable to promote mobility of the students from Estonia and build a learning module that can be carried out in another EU-country (SD, M).

### **Teaching staff**

#### **Standards**

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

#### **Comments**

Lecturing staff appear to be very active, both in terms of their subject specialist development but also in terms of professional studies. It was gratifying to note for example, that five of staff lecturers are preparing a doctoral thesis.



### **Strengths**

- Feedback from the lecturers is very clear, comprehensive and supportive (S).
- Active national and international contacts in research and disseminating applied knowledge on security (M, T).

### **Area of improvement and recommendation**

- There is a need for more practitioner experts to contribute to the programme (E, M, T).

### **Students**

#### **Standards**

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

### **Comments**

According admission indicators of ISI there seems to be quite moderate number of applicants for the Master programme, although those that do apply are very highly motivated. However relatively high number of students drop out. The reasons for dropping out have been family problems, changing jobs etc. Many of the discontinuations have been caused by academic deficiencies.

### **Strengths**

- Very good counselling of the options available (S, T).
- Employers are satisfied with the graduate students (E).
- The Master's programme has a high reputation, both nationally and internationally (E, M, S).

- There is a flexible system of reinstatement of students in place to resume their former studies after they interrupt them (M, S, T).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- Consider enhanced counselling of students before entry so that they are clearer about the workload and commitments required, in addition to the means already employed for this purpose (E, M, S, T).
- Greater involvement of employers to encourage students to undertake Master's rather than simply deciding whether to support them if they apply (E).
- Increase the number of opportunities for Masters' students to participate in research conferences,, for example organised by the EASS and involving other postgraduate students (S).

## **1.3.5. Taxation and Customs (Prof HE); Customs and Taxation (Prof HE)**

### **Study programme and study programme development**

- ✓ Standards
- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

### **Comments**

The programme is developed under the standard of HEI and valid legislation and undergone major changes recently as a new curriculum was introduced in 2014 in line with the latest TCB needs with the possible specialization in either customs or taxation area. The aim of the new programme is to "enable students to start working in the area of finance, either in the public or private sector. They also have a right to work as a customs or tax official." During the visit it became

obvious that managerial boards and specialists of the TCB, the Ministry of Finance and the private sector (from audit houses and law firms) were actively involved in the development process of the new curriculum for customs and taxation.

Many general and introductory subjects were integrated into specialist subjects and therefore the capacity of general subjects was decreased (for example Private Law and Fundamentals of Finance) and the proportion of customs subjects was increased.

The programme includes a reasonable amount of practical training consisting of two internships – introductory and main internship. The capacities of practical internships in both areas were increased from 20 ECTS to 22 ECTS. Practical training also includes independent work. Internship is organized in close cooperation and connection with the main stakeholder TCB, is well supervised and offers real job opportunities after graduation.

Modules of the programme are logically structured and are taught in a logical way enabling students to start with general subjects and move to professional subjects. Modules of the General Subjects includes such necessary courses as Introduction to Law, Introduction to State and Public Administration. The blocks of speciality subjects consist of wide selection of courses corresponding to the specialization and LOs of the programme. Great attention is paid on the coherence of the subjects, which is achieved by the distribution of subject by years and by teachers (same teacher teaching several similar subjects).

Qualitative implementation of the programme is ensured by systematic evaluation of the study programme condition and foreseeing measures for improvement of quality. Internal assurance is carried out feedback. Results of the feedback are taken into consideration and discussed in the Council of the Financial College; improvement activities have been agreed on and carried out.

### **Strengths**

- Efficient and flexible management of the programme in close cooperation with TCB reflected in recent changes of curriculum with specialization both in taxation and customs (E, M, S, SD, T).
- Good amount of practical training (R, S, T).
- The formal feedback systems is well developed and consists of students, alumni and employers opinions and is taken into account during the curriculum development process and managing the programme (E, M, S, SD, T).
- Content and structure of the new curriculum enables students to start working in the private sector (SD).
- The Department is well managed and has clear plans for future development (E, M).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- More effective cooperation with other HEIs in staff research and development area (T) .
- Closer cooperation among Colleges within the academic research and development area (SD, M).
- Better cooperation with main stakeholders TCB in the applied research area (E, M, T).
- Improvement of generic skills and foreign language training (E, M, T).

### **Resources**

#### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

### **Comments**

The facilities are adequate for the current size of the student body involved in the Programme.

The current activities of the EASS are carried out in four learning complexes around Estonia. The main learning complex of the Academy is located in Tallinn, in Pirita district, 61 Kase St. The Financial College has three lecture rooms that are used solely by the Financial College. The condition of rooms and the technical equipment in the rooms is sufficient for carrying out study activities.

Study information systems (e-courses and Moodle) are actively used during the study process, where students can find all the necessary information. OIS is also used for getting personal feedback. From 2011-2016 the lecturers of the Financial College have created a significant amount of e-learning courses and have completed several textbooks.

Modern computer statistic and accounting programmes are used for studies – Gretl, HansaWord, Merit, Reimo FIE. In cooperation with the TCB, the Financial College also uses the software meant for the studies of customs.

The College has already started the development of a simulation environment, which would help students to carry out the activities related to their future jobs during the study process.

Methodical resources are systemically renewed as in some subjects there are not enough modern learning materials (e.g. direct taxes, financial accounting, all subjects related to customs). Study materials are made available to all students, many of which are available in electronic format.

Finances are available for in-service training, conferences are organized on a regular basis.

The library is a speciality library well-furnished with information related to taxation and customs. The library joined the ESTER catalogue recently in order to cooperate with other HEI libraries in Estonia and broaden information search opportunities.

The Financial College is also subscribed to databases of scientific publications – like SAGE Journals Online providing direct and remote access for students. In order to avoid plagiarism KRATT software is used by College since 2014.

### **Strengths**

- Active development and implementation of e-resources, e-learning methods (R, T).
- Usage of contemporary accounting software (R, T).
- Development underway of digital simulation environment (M, R).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- Continuous development of simulation environment implementing the integration plans with other colleges and HEIs is required (E, R).
- Increase the number of subscriptions to scientific databases (e.g. Wiley, Web of Science, Thomson Reuters) (R).

### **Teaching and learning**

#### Standards

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.

- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

### **Comments**

The programme was developed to ensure the optimal interconnection of both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Much attention is paid to the coherence of the subject and the connection among various disciplines.

The study programme students are given regular academic, information-consultation and methodological support. Academic assistants have passed several APEL training programmes to support students and lecturers during the study process. Separate academic assistance is available for the coordination of internships. Students are also provided with academic, social and organizational support. All the necessary information about the programme and courses is available via Moodle. Students can receive both social and academic scholarships in accordance with the College regulations. Students can participate in various non-academic activities.

The College is enrolled into the Erasmus+ mobility programme. Students of the Financial College compose a significant amount of the overall long time mobility at the EASS. However, the mobility of the teaching staff remains modest over the years mainly limited by the participation in international conferences. However, from the students' side participating in Erasmus program or other exchange-possibilities is limited because most of the curriculum subjects are very specific to the particular study field.

Training practice is supervised by teachers of the College and the supervisor from the company. All the necessary arrangements for the internship are in place.

Students have lectures in the class, as well as homework, internship includes both practical and individual work, a strong practical aspect is evident. Different teaching methods are used, starting from the traditional lecture and finishing with the newest methods, e.g. flipped classroom, e-learning or open space. Many e-learning materials and technological equipment (programs) are used. Individual consultation is ensured as every lecturer has consultation hours once a week. Assessment aims are to evaluate achievement of learning outcomes and competencies of the students. Assessments are carried out according to internal regulations and procedures.

Coherence of the subjects is ensured by having the same lecturer teaching general subjects in one area. This system enables a lecturer to have a more systematic approach to the teaching of the whole discipline. Also simulation is

used in order to integrate different subjects and theory with practice. The quality of teaching and lecturers is assessed through students' feedback.

Internship places and supervisors are agreed on in cooperation with the TCB and representatives of the private sector.

The grade point averages of all the study groups of daytime learning have in all years been higher than the levels set in the EASS's Development Plan. Academic performance of distance learning students have been somewhat lower, but in the two last academic years, still higher than in the EASS's Development Plan.

Graduation criteria are the graduation thesis. The students are supervised during the process, three seminars are held and individual consultations take place.

Seminars to improve teaching are organized on a regular basis. A mentor system is provided for new lecturers. General relations between lecturers are very supportive. Every year best lecturers are nominated and awarded.

Simulation program related activities are underway and the College foresees a good and clear perspective of cooperation with other HEI's in this field.

The feedback system is very transparent and efficient – SIS; group interviews; survey after the end of the course; via Moodle. Feedback is used in order to make changes, for example the foreign language capacity was increased.

Final thesis topics are offered by lecturers and Tax and Customs Board, students are also allowed to choose topics themselves.

### **Strengths**

- Very good opportunities for internship and close cooperation with the TCB and representatives of the private sector in this field (E, M, S, T).
- Academic assistants, staff and teachers offer support to students and lecturers throughout the whole study process (S, T).
- Assessment criteria are adequate, clear and transparent (SD, S).
- Close cooperation between teaching staff and students ensures good quality of supervision of final thesis (S, T) .
- Good balance of theory and practice in teaching process in achieved (E, SD, S, T).
- Integration and interrelation of theoretical base of different subjects via practical case studies (SD, T).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- In line with students expectations invite more visiting lecturers especially for the international topics concerned (S).

- More self-defence courses for students specializing in customs should be offered (E, SD).

## Teaching staff

### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

### Comments

According to SER in the period of the self-evaluation at the Financial College there were five lecturers employed and one administrative person. Among them two have a Doctor degree, and four have a Master's degree, three are doctoral students. All academic staff have practical experience in the area. The teachers involved represent a wide range of qualifications, in accordance with the broad scope of the Programme. They also provide training and workshops outside the College for private companies and other HEIs in Estonia. Non-academic staff lecturers are teaching ca 27% of the curriculum courses. Staff lecturers carry out taxation and customs related in-service training for the workers of both the public and private sector and hold lectures in other institutions of higher education.

Employer representatives are also involved in the teaching process of supervising and reviewing course and graduation papers and participating in different defence committees. Lectures are also held by visiting lecturers from abroad and other HEIs, and cooperation with other HEIs of Estonia is in place.

The scientific research activities and publications of the teaching staff are directly related to the programme, articles have been published in the scientific



publications of international databases. From 2012 to 2016, the lecturers and the director have published 116 research papers. Two of them have the Estonian Research Information System classification 1.1 and 15 of them have the classification 1.2. The main research areas of the lecturers of the Financial College concern challenges related with the influencing of tax behaviour, current problems related to the imposing of VAT, evaluation and optimisation of the influences of taxation policies, entrepreneurship, cooperation between the public and private sector and the state's finance in general.

Further training and professional development of lecturers is supported. In order to increase the number of research publications, cooperation between the Colleges and with the Tax and Customs Board is encouraged.

Lecturers' achievements in the teaching process, research and development activities and administrative activities are regularly evaluated and they receive feedback on their teaching performance.

### **Strengths**

- Both staff- and non-staff lecturers have practical experience (T).
- Active participation in preparation and publication of various textbooks (T).

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- Teaching workloads appear to be quite high and it makes it difficult for teaching staff to find time for self-development or research (M, T).
- The financial support and motivation of staff to undertake research activities needs to be reviewed to ensure it is sufficient for needs (M, T).
- More support for visiting lecturers in development of syllabus and choosing teaching methods (SD, M, T).
- Encourage the TCB to increase its involvement in choosing visiting lecturers (E, M).
- The requirements for undertaking research activities should be made more clear and transparent to the teaching staff (T).

### **Students**

#### Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.

- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

### **Comments**

Student places are filled with motivated and capable students, which is demonstrated by tough competition during the admission procedure and the number of applicants higher than average in Estonia and also supported by the positive feedback from the alumni and employers. Alumni of the Financial College are successful on the labour market and many of them have executive positions both in public and private sectors. The number of applicants to the curriculum has dropped because of the higher education reform, as since then, the HEI cannot provide paid studies and thus, there's no longer distance learning.

Various academic and non-academic facilities are created for students in the College, students can actively participate in various activities, take part in the Erasmus+ mobility programme and benefit from the College environment.

From 2011 to 2015, competition for one student has been 6.33-12.9 in daytime learning and 1.68-1.94 in distance studies. The number of state commissioned student places is decided upon by the TCB and it depends on their strategic needs and forecasts. Since 2014, there have been 20 student places for the area of customs and 15 for the area of taxation every year. The admission process includes interview for assessing the knowledge and attitudes of the candidate, and physical test.

The number of students graduating in the nominal period of studies has increased after the College had to move from daytime learning and distance learning to full-time and part-time studies. The main reason for discontinuing the studies has been withdrawing from the Academy voluntarily due to financial or family related reasons. In case of any signs of academic deficiency, students have a week to remedy the deficiencies and can receive an individual schedule and counselling from the academic assistant, if necessary. The main reason for dropout is failure of the graduation thesis.

Students are satisfied with the content, format and methods of studies, and also with the support services, feel motivated and supported during the whole study process. Employment rate among alumni is high; some students also continue their studies on EASS' Masters' programs or in other universities.

### **Strengths**

- High number of applicants and high number of graduates (SD).
- A student-friendly environment created by the College (R, S, T).
- Students are highly motivated during the whole study process (S).
- Learning outcomes and study plans meet student expectations (S).

**Areas of improvement and recommendations**

- To strengthen of student research activity and student mobility. The current credit transfer arrangements do not appear flexible enough (SD, M, S).
- Strengthening of cooperation with TCB in choosing and writing final thesis (E, M, S).