

Assessment Report

Study Programme Group of Social Services

Tallinn University

University of Tartu

Lääne-Viru College



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Introduction

The aim of the assessment team was the evaluation of the study programme group of Social Services in 3 higher education institutions: Tallinn University, University of Tartu, and Lääne-Viru College.

The team was asked to assess the conformity of the study programmes belonging to the study programme group and the instruction provided on the basis thereof to legislation and to national and international standards and/or recommendations, including 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 resources for the provision of instruction.

The following persons formed the assessment team:

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After the preparation phase, the work of the assessment team in Estonia started on Monday, April 13, 2015, with an introduction to the Higher Education System as well as the assessment procedure by EKKK, the Estonian Quality assurance organization for higher and

vocational education. The members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group at the three institutions, who were part of the assessment process. 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 Tallinn University (Tuesday the 14th, Wednesday the 15th, and Thursday the 16th), University of Tartu (Thursday the 16th and Friday the 17th), and Lääne-Viru College (Thursday the 16th). In all cases, the schedule for discussion on site for each of the various study programmes only allowed for short time slots to be available for team members to exchange information, discuss conclusions and implications for further questions.

In all three institutions the discussions with management of Colleges and Institutes, the persons responsible for the study programmes, the staff, the students and the representatives from the employment market (employers and alumni) were very interesting and allowed for an exchange of ideas.

On Saturday, April 18, the team held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report was agreed and 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 intensively discussed their individual views on the relevant topics.

General findings and long-term recommendations

The team were impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of the teaching staff, the support offered by institutions in developing staff and the efforts made to develop the programmes in a contemporary way. The team found that there were generally good systems of feedback which took account of student and employer feedback however this could be developed more systematically to create a stronger internal quality assurance system.

The team noted the contribution of the local colleges to the study programme group and found this to be an important component of the higher education system. Whilst the programmes provide a good learning experience for students and preparation for the world of work, the team felt that generally linkages between the programmes could be strengthened to provide a stronger lifelong learning framework which took advantage of prior learning experiences, work based learning and recognised formal and informal learning more readily.

The team found that the study programme group was quite disparate in its make up with two main component parts, and has structured some general comments to provide feedback in three main areas: social work, youth work, and some general comments about lifelong learning.

Some general comments on Social Work study programmes

As inscribed in the International definition, social work is both a profession and an academic discipline. As an academic discipline, social work goes back more than a century. From 1920s, the discipline of social work was strongly influenced by the Chicago school of American sociology, with its emphasis of symbolic interactionism and its focus on poverty, migration and biographical research. This tradition, together with a British tradition of social assistance, has formed the basis for the discipline of social work as it is understood today. The core of the academic discipline is the understanding and analyses of social problems and how they are produced and constructed, and the understanding of how different perspectives determine the ways in which social problems are approached. The academic discipline, together with important contributions from other disciplines, forms the armour of the social work profession and practice.

A general impression across social work programmes is that priority is given to the practical and professional elements of social work at the expense of the theoretical knowledge required to conceptually integrate the different elements into a comprehensive conception of social work. Even in programmes with less internship, priority seems to be put on substantive and therapeutic elements, more than on theoretical deepening. Students seem to have a lot of knowledge about social problems and about social work methods, but many students had difficulties accounting for basic theoretical elements and principles of social work. They also seem to lack a deeper understanding of the social processes and mechanisms producing and maintaining social problems. Instead, some articulated a certain opposition between theoretical knowledge and “practical reality”, giving the latter priority over the former. The evaluation team believes that a stronger emphasis on theoretical training would make students more analytically equipped to approach not only social problems as they appear but also the processes and mechanisms that produce them. That, we believe, will also give students a more firm and coherent social work identity.

Some general comments on Youth Work study programmes

Revision of all three youth work study programmes (i.e, Youth Work at Tallinn University, Youth Work at UT Narva College, and Leisure Time Manager-Teacher programme at UT Viljandi Culture Academy) align with the youth worker professional standard. In further revisions of study programmes, integrate the term youth field (*noortevaldkond*) in cases where both youth work (*noorsootöö*) and youth policy (*noortepoliitika*) is concerned, which should be the case for all study programmes anyhow, as this is the approach recognised also with the latest development plan for the youth field on national level 2014-2020 (*Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020*).

To set up a well-elaborated and motivated strategy for cooperation between Tallinn University, UT Narva College, and UT Viljandi Culture Academy offering youth work programmes in Estonia in levels and forms to benefit various stakeholders – from programme managers to students.

It is recommended to encourage the current teaching staff from all youth work study programmes to acquire the occupational standard of youth workers themselves (as trainers and educators in youth field are included in the list of respective job profiles) and use that process to identify needs for and provide additional training to the teaching staff, also drawing on international further education offers, incl. international research and mobility.

While it is clear that current higher education policies regarding funding make it problematic and are a disincentive to offering part-time studies, the universities should, nonetheless, consider how they can better support the vast majority of students who need to work to finance their studies, also enhance recognition of work-based learning as part of study programmes.

Some general comments on the relationship between first and second cycle in a lifelong learning framework

The team gave a lot of consideration regarding the relation between bachelor and master level, or more precisely the progression from graduate to postgraduate level of education. It seems that master programmes generally accept students with very different bachelor degrees, and even bachelors that do not prepare very well for the master programmes in question. It is being said that institutions are not allowed to deny students with a bachelor's degree (with the grades required) to enter a master's programme. The team could not understand this application of the principles laid down in the Bologna Process. It is a fundamental principle to secure a reasonable progression in educational programmes, which is why learning outcomes are expected differently for graduate and postgraduate programmes respectively. Certain flexibility is of course desirable, and the team appreciate the need to accommodate entrants with diverse backgrounds but not in such a way that entrants to a master programme have little or no basic training in the discipline or subject of the master. A bachelor degree in social work does not qualify for entering a master programme in physics or economics, and thus not either the opposite way around. Admitting students with too little preparatory training will impede not only the progression expected in postgraduate education but also the level of completion. We suggest that the educational authorities put in place regulatory mechanisms to make institutions adopt admission criteria that secure clearer and more sufficient progression between levels of higher education.

Related to this the team noted the highly specific routes of preparation within the study programme group, for example Health Promotion Specialist and Social Work Administration and Rehabilitation. The team concluded that these routes resulted in a narrowing of career opportunities and a general lack of coherence within programmes, across the study group and in the articulation between first and second cycle.

Finally, the team noted the unusual situation, in European terms, by which programmes were generally offered full time in two different modes of delivery, both full time but for very distinctive groups, these being those employed and those not employed. The team could only understand this arrangement in the context of tuition fee arrangements. Whilst on one hand the team can appreciate that this is a form of widening access and improving

opportunities for education on the other, it causes multiple complications, not least in teacher workload but also in creating a coherent lifelong learning framework. The team believe that there is an opportunity to revisit this situation in a LLL context and consider how issues such as articulation, coherence, work based learning, recognition of prior and informal learning can be introduced and maximised to create an educationally led approach which is time efficient for both teachers and students.

1. Assessment report of SPG at Tallinn University

Study programme group	<i>Social Services</i>
Higher education institution	Tallinn University
Study programmes	Youth Work (Prof HE) Health Promotion Specialist (Prof HE) Social Pedagogy (Bachelor) Social Work (Bachelor) Social Work (Master) Social Pedagogy and Child Protection (Master)

1.1. Introduction and general findings at study programme group level

Comments

The team assessed six programmes at Tallinn University, among them two professional higher education programmes, two bachelor and two master programmes. The team visited the campus of the University in Tallinn, where programmes in Social Work, Youth Work, Social Pedagogy and Child Protection are conducted; it also visited the Rakvere College of TLU, where Social Pedagogy is conducted. Due to time restrictions, it was unfortunately not possible to visit the Haapsalu College of TLU for the assessment of Health Promotion Specialist programme; however, the Director and other representatives of the College kindly met with the team in Tallinn, which was much appreciated.

The team met with some really enthusiastic teachers who are bringing innovative approaches to their work. We heard from students how much they value this. The team noted that the teachers value the opportunities provided by the university to enhance their teaching and that there is a strong development programme available. The team heard that engaging in development opportunities is something that teachers do beyond their normal work. The team believes that a more systematic approach to teaching and learning development and a good overall governance plan would be a more fruitful investment rather than providing opportunities for interested individuals.

Strengths

- Enthusiastic teachers, keen to try new teaching methods and keep up to date.
- Very motivated and capable students.
- Alumni and their employers are in general satisfied with professional preparation and social competencies acquired from the University.
- Attempts to address interdisciplinary, internationalisation and identity issues.
- Good support from University for teacher development.

- The development of study programmes involves various partners both internally and externally.
- Good teaching and learning facilities, with a very good library.

Areas for improvement

- The areas of identity, internationalisation, and interdisciplinary provide a good focus for development; however, the identification of actions and their implementation need to be considered further in a holistic context rather than the current disparate approaches.
- Recent improvements to the programmes arise from employer and student feedback and this could be more systematically addressed within a clearer internal quality assurance process.

Recommendation

- Reflect on the issues of internationalisation, identity and interdisciplinary before implementing solutions. Create clear comprehensive statements and definition which will support a programme philosophy.

1.2. Strengths and Areas for Improvement of Study Programmes by assessment areas

1.2.1. Youth Work (Prof HE)

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths

- Against the background of recent as well as further planned major structural changes within Tallinn University, the study programme presented has gone through a rigorous evaluation process, involving various partners both internally and externally.
- The steps that have been taken to revise and improve the curriculum are adequate and appear to respond well to concerns identified in stakeholder consultations, again involving not only students and lecturers, but also practitioners and employers.
- The alignment with youth worker professional standards is a particularly welcome and constructive development, as is the introduction of a Master programme on youth work. It remains to be seen how effective these changes will be, as most of them are recent developments.

Areas for improvement

- The programme needs to be further developed to better prepare graduates for the variety of occupational profiles in the youth field. The present focus on the

pedagogical and psychological aspects of youth work neglects the growing diversification of the sector, which now includes many occupational profiles, from national policy work to local applied research. This diversity needs to be clearly reflected at all levels: from introducing the field to first-semester students to adjusting the course catalogue and the competence-set of teaching staff. Among other expected impacts, these changes should also aim to guide and direct graduates who have a clear understanding and vision on their diverse career opportunities in the youth field – one of the quality aspects that appears absent at present.

- The proposed strengthening of non-formal education in the programme is, both conceptually and strategically, a very positive development. The opportunity should, at the same time, be used to strengthen other thematic areas intrinsically linked with youth work, such as youth policy and youth participation, and more generally develop students' critically reflective capacity as youth work practitioners.
- With the upcoming and additional revisions of the curriculum, it will become crucially important for the programme management to align teaching practice with the new course vision. Only a vision that is shared, by lecturers and students alike, will be translated into the daily routine of the programme. More attention should be paid to efficiency in programme implementation as there are now several courses that appear to run with very few numbers of students – or even individual students – present at lectures and seminars. At the same time, students have pointed to the apparent frequency of lesson cancellations and the resulting loss of learning potential on these courses.
- The amount of ECTS per semester fluctuates considerably, resulting in avoidable periods of stress and deadlines for students and stress and workload for lecturers.

Recommendations

- The curriculum should be further developed to reflect the reality of diverse occupational profiles and developments in the youth field. Together with the strengthening of non-formal education in the programme, other thematic areas of youth work should be further developed, and the workload should be commensurate across all semesters.
- In addition, the course programmes should be further revised to make them fully responsive to youth field specifics and to strengthen consistency between their objectives, expected learning outcomes, content and support literature. For example in the case of “Ethics and Value Education in Youth Work” the course description, list of literature and additional information provided about the content of the course do not make adequate reference to youth work as such; it is strongly recommended that in the programme “Basics of Scientific Research and Research Seminar I” students get acquainted with the latest research in the youth field; more consistency needs to be achieved on how the youth field at European level is being addressed in the course “Management, Leadership and Structures of Youth Work”.
- It is further recommended that youth work specific introductory courses in the first and second semester be strengthened; to rework the logic and structure of practice placements to make them more adaptable and responsive; to pay closer attention to repetitions and overlaps between courses; to improve the support provided to students, including feedback on assignments; to integrate students into the professional youth work community; and to boost the internationalisation

dimension, including frequent lecturer and student mobility. Employers have also recommended that the study programme be further developed by more effectively integrating some of the unique strengths of the youth field in Estonia, such as youth work quality assessment, professionalization of the youth field etc. that would strengthen the programme's national and potential international role in the youth field.

Resources

Comments

All stakeholders agree that the programme is generally well equipped with the necessary teaching equipment, aids and materials.

Area for improvement

- The programme is supported by three different e-learning and e-management environments. English material is available, but underutilised. The physical infrastructure for lectures is considered inadequate at present; however, study programme lectures will be accommodated in the new premises of Tallinn University as of autumn 2015.

Recommendation

- The University should seek to make e-learning environments more user-friendly. English language material should not only be available, but be used more proactively and be more effectively integrated with course work. Some lecture halls should have the facilities to cater for the use of youth-work-tailored teaching methods.

Teaching and learning

Area for improvement

- The teaching methods at present appear to favour a practitioner's approach; however, in light of recent structural reforms in Tallinn University, as well as with the introduction of a Master's Programme, the nature and mix of teaching methods need to be re-evaluated and revised. While student assessment appears to be fair and consistent, some students are unclear as to the reasons for being given a specific grade.

Recommendations

- More attention should be paid to finding a better balance between practical, theoretical and research approaches to examining youth work practice, and on supporting and encouraging those students interested in pursuing a Master's degree.
- Students should be given adequate feedback on their learning progress and grades.

Teaching staff

Strength

- The active involvement of practitioners in the field and relevant experts is a positive strength in the teaching of the programme.

Area for improvement

- Most of the courses are conducted by a comparatively small number of lecturers, who need additional support to further develop their professional competences and motivation, particularly in light of upcoming curriculum revisions that seek to address wider occupational profiles in the youth field, diversity of youth work practice and policy issues and include theories underpinning youth work, such as non-formal education and youth participation.

Recommendations

- In further developing the study programme and its curricula, a shared vision, encompassing clear direction and enhanced motivation, should be prioritised and promoted among all internal stakeholders, incl. teaching staff, and support measures such as team meetings and development seminars etc. should be introduced as regular practice.
- The University should use the opportunity in introducing a Master's Programme in Youth Work to further motivate and refocus teaching staff and, at the same time, diversify the roles and profiles of lecturers. In addition, outreach to the youth sector should be used to provide additional expertise through the recruitment of external lecturers.
- The teaching staff should be encouraged and supported to acquire the occupational standards of youth workers themselves (as trainers and educators in youth field are included in the list of respective job profiles) and use that process to identify the need for and the provision of additional training for teaching staff, while also further enhancing research and mobility at international level.

Students

Strengths

- Following a long period of high drop-out rates, the programme's admission scheme now focuses on identifying prospective students that are motivated and interested in their choice of profession. Accordingly, the rate of satisfaction among first-year students appears to have increased, while the drop-out rate has decreased.
- The access to child care has greatly increased the appeal and accessibility of the programme, particularly for youth work practitioners.

Areas for improvement

- Mobility among students is low: in the academic year 2013-2014 only 8 students studied abroad. Connections and cooperation between students at the three

institutions offering youth work programmes are weak, students' links with the professional community in the youth field also appear weak. The percentage of exmatriculations (17%) is high.

- Support for students tends to be peer-to-peer rather than management-to-student. The majority of students work while studying, but course arrangements make it difficult to combine study and work. Some students appear to be poorly informed of the nature and extent of career opportunities in youth field.

Recommendations

- Information exchange and co-operation between students on youth work study programmes in Estonia, Europe and internationally needs to be strengthened.
- Students should be encouraged and supported to associate with the professional youth work community.
- Support measures available to students need to take account of and better facilitate the majority of students who have to work to finance their studies.

1.2.2. Health promotion Specialist (Prof HE)

Study programme and study programme development

Comments

The SER (Self-Evaluation Report) includes the general objectives and learning outcomes, and there is a systematic plan to present these and the Standards for Higher Education as structures for the curriculum overall and for the courses. The different parts of the study programme, including compulsory, elective, and practice courses are presented. The study programme offers two elective specializations: "Health promotion" (in social work or rehabilitation) and "Nutrition Counselling". As was mentioned by the programme managers, the options for these specializations change every 2-3 years. The regional labour market needs were emphasized during the meetings but it was unclear how the selected electives followed these needs. The team were told that financial resources for Health promotion field activities and development usually come from regional municipalities because this field is not popular among politicians and do not receive support from state. That can result as problem for students to find appropriate work places in the field of specialisation in future. These points contribute to a lack of clarity regarding programme delivery and labour market need. The SER should present more detailed description and additional material about teachers' qualifications and their work load to demonstrate that their qualifications match the specialities delivered.

Strengths

- Feedback from students, apparently at the course level, is routinely gathered and has been used for improvement at that level and in some administrative matters. Feedback seems to consist of surveys or other forms of opinion by students and field placement personnel.
- Academic staff implement changes based on students' feedback and bring them to Curricula Council. Teacher's discuss study programme development during academic

staff meetings. Curricula Council meets twice a year, for 1-2 day long seminars. Alumni and employers are also involved.

Areas for improvement

- The overall rationale for the programme is incoherent and needs proper justification. Representatives from different groups had different perspectives on this issue which were often conflicting and inconsistent.
- It seems that the programme tries to follow labour market needs but it was difficult for the team to judge since the evidence of labour market needs was not presented.
- It is not clear how health promotion practice relates to social work and rehabilitation in concept or in actual practice on the job. Students representing “Nutrition Counselling” specialisation seemed to be clearer about their employment potential than those from “Health promotion” specialisation.
- Coherence in the study programme would be improved by making it clear how the components (standards, objectives, outcomes, courses, assignments, practice, and others) relate to one another in terms of learning progression, relation of one professional domain to another, use of coursework learning in practice.
- While meeting the representatives of different groups at Tallinn University, the importance of practical skills, as the strength of professional higher education programme, was emphasized. As managers of the study programme noted, the programme is changing to be more service based, orientated to people. However, the specific skills orientated toward direct service provision are not clearly defined and reflected in programme learning outcomes.
- In the modules, the objectives listed are accompanied by course listings to demonstrate where the objectives are to be learned or achieved, but how the courses are related to objectives is not always clear. For example, the module “Health Promotion Module: Health Management” has very many elements in the objectives, including different ages, therapeutic techniques, knowledge of health related research, and several others. The courses listed for the module do not appear to address the objectives.

Recommendations

- A clear concept and core of the study programme (“What is this programme about?” and “What jobs the graduates are prepared for?”) is needs to be defined. The core conception of the study programme should be developed and presented in clear and more specific way.
- Presentation of the content and structure (for example the listing of objectives, learning outcomes, evaluation for each module) in a format that matches learning objectives is good, and it should be further developed to make it clear that there is consistency across the programme.
- The objectives and learning outcomes are relatively broad and general, and often there are more than one of them listed as a single outcome or objective, making it hard to assess whether they have been mastered or accomplished. Therefore, clarifying and specifying these elements would make the presentation stronger.
- It would be useful to present the study programme’s overall approach to teaching and learning to be a health promotion specialist. This means specifying the roles of different sorts of teaching that are consistent with learning styles, challenges, and

progress. With this knowledge, a student would be expected to gain a greater sense of coherence and awareness of employment prospects.

- Evidence of labour market need and demand (the jobs taken by graduates and the needs for health promotion specialists) would help to justify the purpose and aid the development of the study programme.
- A plan should be developed for comprehensive and continuous feedback from students, employers, alumni, and other stakeholders such as service users that forms the basis of an internal quality assurance system.

Resources

The evaluation team was not able to evaluate library, equipment and environment in the Haapsalu College as it did not visit the College. All evaluation of resources is based on self-evaluation report and meetings with representatives of the College.

Strengths

- According to the SER and reports from teachers and students, the teaching environment and equipment is of good quality.
- The College has a very flexible approach; the small size of institution allows to make changes when a need is recognised.
- Uniqueness of study programme. This is the only study programme in health promotion field that is located in social service study programme group and is not a part of medicine studies. This allows to attract more students from different fields.

Areas for improvement

- The academic staff of College should secure more teaching materials and information resources in Estonian language because part of students struggle with learning from materials in foreign languages.
- Health promotion field in Estonia is recently established and this study programme is unique in Estonia. The team heard of a lack of teaching and learning materials in Estonian language in the library of College and online open resources.
- Although in total there are three health promotion study programmes in Estonia, two other study programmes are oriented more to medical education, the different scope limits opportunities to collaborate and use shared information materials and library resources.

Reccomendation

- Ensure that the scope of the programme is clearly defined and that there is an adequate stock of relevant library materials available to students that they can understand.

Teaching and learning

Strengths:

- Employment rate of alumni is high.

- Alumni and their employers are satisfied with their professional preparation and social competencies.
- College provide students with a lot of practical task experience during study programme. College has collaboration with partners from labour market to ensure internships, common projects and practical tasks in variety of subtopics of study programme (College collaborates with spa and rehabilitation centres, hospitals, restaurants etc).
- Students are satisfied with opportunities for learning.

Areas for improvement

- The wide scope of programme does not help college to set the clear focus and core issues of this study programme and can mislead students. Students could not name their future work possibilities (statistics show that only 50% of respondents from alumni work in field of specialisation).

Teaching staff

Strengths

- The study programme involves “industry experts and leading specialists of the field, who are also the opinion leaders in the health promotion field” (SER, p. 56). This seems to be important for the study programme development.
- Teachers are members of various professional organizations, some participate in projects.
- During the visit teachers told about the courses and seminars they can participate for developing their teaching skills.

Areas for improvement

- The team could not assess if teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme in part because of limited presentation of information on teacher contributors to the programme and partly due to the nature of the programme of which the team had no comparable experience.
- The scores given to the lectures by the students of the Health Promotion Specialist study programme are very high, although it is not clear what specific issues were evaluated, what conclusions and future plans were made.
- Lecturers are constantly improving their skills by attending training courses, seminars and international conferences. We could not find this information presented in the SER. International mobility of the programme teachers should be strengthened.
- It is difficult to develop this health promotion field at a national level, make it international and support research of academic staff and students because of uniqueness of study programme, limited resources and size of College.

Recommendations

- To strengthen teachers’ international mobility.

- To strengthen teachers' involvement in research projects.
- The student survey (or other form of measurement) used for the lecturers' evaluation and the results of this evaluation should be more clearly linked to an overall plan for the governance and improvement of teaching and learning.

Students

Strengths

- Student places are filled with motivated and capable students. Dropout rates are relatively low, the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is above average.
- Students study as foreign or visiting students at other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as part of their studies.
- Students have prior experience of studying in other fields or have professional experience that allow to use peer learning approaches in study processes as well as increase importance of life long learning and collaboration between different fields.

Areas for improvement

- Part of students in this study programme struggle with foreign languages, they are not able to read materials in English language and participate in ERASMUS mobility (in last two years only two students have been in exchange abroad).
- Although students representation is formally established and student representatives participate in decision-making processes, there are signs that course elder system does not work properly in this programme. Students do not know their representatives in the study programme council.
- Current students expressed that they are interested in the study programme for personal interest or for widening their knowledge and become more professional in their current position; they were not interested in work positions in this field. Further learning programme would be more appropriate for this kind of students.

Reccomendations

- College should develop students enterpreneural skills because of several reasons also mentioned above - poor financial support from government, problems of students to find appropriate work places in the field of specialisation.
- To increase mobility rate of students' short-term mobility options (e.g. 2 weeks) could be offered for students; short-term mobility would be more accessible for students with families and full-time working students.
- College should offer and promote students to take foreign language courses to be able to learn from materials in different languages, especially the English language.

1.2.3. Social Pedagogy (BA)

Study programme and study programme development

Comments

The general objectives and learning outcomes are stated. SER includes the structure showing how learning outcomes of the curriculum, its modules and courses are consistent with the learning outcomes to be achieved according to the Standard of Higher Education.

The structure of the Social Pedagogy study programme is based on the general requirements of the TLU statute on general structure of study programmes and includes the following domains of TLU BA study programme: general subjects, core subjects, free electives, practice and final thesis.

Strengths

- The aim of the study programme is based on the legislation and labour market needs. As the representatives from different groups explained, the interviews and research, which were conducted before the commencement of curriculum of Social Pedagogy, highlighted the pressing need for social pedagogy specialists in schools. The preparations were made during several years before the opening the curriculum and the surveys focused on the need for specialists dealing with problems with students at school. According to the Estonian Ministry of Education, 188 persons were working as social pedagogues at schools in 2014/2015. Other relevant organisations also stressed the need for and relevance of the programme.
- Additional measures are being considered - such as use of interviews with students - to further strengthen existing quality assurance measures on the study programme.

Areas of improvement

- A wide variety of electives is offered in the study programme. The programme managers see this as offering students from different backgrounds the opportunity to develop their individual skills and capacities. We think that the volumes and contents of both compulsory and open elective blocks could be revised. Foreign language and ICT skills are really important but could be achieved as optional electives or even by independent studies. The majority of open electives seem to be very important courses and could be mandatory for all students studying in Social Pedagogy programme despite the professional related interests and needs.
- One of the learning outcomes for the course on “Structure and Methods of Research” is “The student/ is able to plan and conduct empirical research paper necessary for a BA-thesis in accordance with ethical requirements”. The level and content of the course (4 ECTS) appears to be not high enough or sufficient to achieve this outcome. The same can be said with regard to the number/level of Placements I and II (9 ECTS overall). Although the volume of placement (9 ECTS) corresponds to the Standard of Higher Education it seems that such a volume is insufficient time to achieve the objectives listed.

Recommendations

- The study programme of Social Pedagogy needs to give a clear picture of programme coherence, showing how each component relates to others (standards, objectives, study results, courses and their results, assignments, practice, final project). We understand that it could happen because of limited nature of SER, but, nevertheless, the Committee cannot see the coherence of the programme at the moment.
- Review the level/number of courses (subjects) mentioned above with a view to achieving greater consistency between the objectives, content and learning outcomes of these courses (subjects).

Resources

Strengths

- Although the students are few in number, it is increasing following reform of the funding model for higher education in Estonia. As a consequence, the study programme will become more sustainable and viable in the future.
- Each teacher has provided students with at least some materials on study courses - in Moodle. IT specialist help is available for teaching staff to further develop their materials and use the Moodle system.
- Classrooms are well equipped for study process.

Areas for improvement

- Additional funds should be provided for both students and academic staff to attend national and international conferences.
- Consideration should be given to providing students with more e-materials and links to e-resources and such information is best provided in one e-learning system e.g. in Moodle system which is already in use.

Recommendations

- Provide additional funding for student/teacher attendance at relevant international conferences and events.
- Provide more accessible e-material and links to e-resources for students.
- Improve library capacity. The selection of literature in the library could be improved

Teaching and learning

Comments

The statute and regulations for the study programme are generally effective in supporting teachers and students in achieving the desired learning outcomes.

Strengths

- Access to and supports for electronic systems for study purposes are generally good.
- Effective counselling system is in place that effectively targets relevant groups.

- Feedback on programme management is generally positive.

Areas for improvement

- There is an unduly heavy workload for teachers in preparing and writing course work and documentation.
- There is a need for expanding and further extending the use of electronic methods for study purposes and learning.

Recommendations

- Provide additional training and support for teachers in preparing and writing course work and documentation for students.
- Provide additional training and supports for both students and teachers in the use of electronic systems for teaching and learning.
- Encourage the participation of teacher/students to attend international seminars and make use of the EU mobility programmes.

Teaching staff

Strengths

- The input of industry experts to the study programme, particularly with regard to students' practical training.
- Teachers are encouraged to improve their professional skills and qualifications through continuing education (courses for teachers), attendance of conferences and seminars. Individual support for teachers in using electronic devices and up-to-date methodologies is emphasized in the study programme.
- Surveys were conducted with students, employers and alumni with a view to improving the relevance and quality of the study programme.
- Programme managers are assessing and evaluating new measures (interviews, group discussions, etc) for improving programme quality and development.

Areas for improvement

- International mobility of teachers (inward and outward) needs to be further strengthened.
- As noted in SER, teachers' motivation and professional self-development may be hampered by heavy workload. It appears from the SER that some 40% of the study programme work-load is taught by part-time teachers with temporally/authorization contracts).
- While overall student assessment on teaching skills is positive, some students expressed the need for more creative and flexible teaching methods that support students' professional development.

Recommendations

- Strengthen international teacher mobility.

- More full-time or permanent teachers should be appointed where and when possible.
- The work-load of teachers should be reviewed and discussed on an ongoing basis by the programme managers and the relevant authorities with a view to ensuring an equitable and manageable overall work-load.
- Support teachers' professional development and upgrade qualifications in implementing new teaching methods.

Students

Comments

Recently adopted professional standard of social pedagogy specialist and state requirements to provide social services and support in every school has increased the number of potential work-places in the field. Information from site visit indicates that the demand for professional specialists will further expand in the coming years.

Strengths

- The relevance and appeal of the study programme is evidenced by the number of applicants and students from different backgrounds from across Estonia.
- Students are motivated to learn, despite the fact that a majority of them are employed on either a part-time or full-time basis during their studies.
- Graduates of this study programme, when compared with graduates of other pedagogy study programmes, possess superior skills and competences that enable them to work more effectively with children with special needs and provide counselling in schools.
- Programme managers take an active role in communication with students. Students' coordinators provide help in relation to studies and ensure that study requirements are completed on time.

Areas for improvement

- Collaboration with international partners should be increased and the international mobility of students and academic staff further enhanced. Short-term mobility projects should be promoted as a better option for students with families and in full-time work.
- It is the view of stakeholders that students should be taught more on how to work with people with special needs and the socially disadvantaged and enhance their learning outcomes.

Recommendations

- Further develop international cooperation and student/teacher mobility.
- Strengthen students' capacity to work with young people with special needs and the socially and economically disadvantaged and enhance their learning outcomes.

1.2.4. Social Work (BA); Social Work (MA)

Study programme and study programme development

BA programme:

Strengths

- There is a very wide and rich variety of courses and modules for students. There are many options. The compulsory courses cover the main topics accepted for social work programmes. The objectives and learning outcomes (curriculum results and study results in the language of the self study) are stated, and they are generally clear and appropriate.
- The specified basis of the programme is addressed, including labour market, feasibility within the university of a combined social pedagogy and social work programme and staff, and professional standards.
- Positive and creative efforts by the programme team for continual improvement. The programme has used student feedback of an unspecified sort to clarify strengths in the deliberate inclusion of similar material in different courses. There is use of foreign human resources to enrich the programme.

Areas for improvement

- The SER presented all of the relevant information; however, both in SER and in subsequent meetings it is difficult to see coherence between the content and structure and objectives and learning outcomes. For example “target groups,” “areas,” and “different client groups” are hard to differentiate making it unclear what the objectives apply to. This in turn makes it difficult to understand exactly what areas are being covered in objectives and course content and proportion of the study programme.
- There is a strong emphasis on child-related courses, which might reflect strength based on the integration with social pedagogy, but this characteristic is not presented as a clear part of the structure. It is not clear why some courses (modules) are not compulsory, for example “Social Workers Communicative Skills,” which would seem to be important for all. It would be illuminating to provide clear justification of topics for inclusion. This would make the programme focus and employability skills clearer to employers and students as well as strengthen identity.
- There is no clear explanation of how the different parts of field practice are coordinated or sequenced, leaving the possibility of fragmentation. It would seem that practice for a student concentrating on one of the specialisations (different areas or target groups) should be tailored to that specialisation.
- The complexity of the courses, specialisations, and sequencing of the study programme suggests that students would need clear guidance about how to plan their experience to personalise and maximise their opportunities. It was not evident that this is present.
- The presentations of the areas of study programme development are very superficial. One does not know exactly what the bases are in any concrete terms. For example, it is unclear how and why the various specialisations in the programme were determined, and it would be useful to have information on demographics,

social problems, and labour market to assess the role and need of the specializations.

- Feedback appears to be at best loosely related to programme outcomes, and more oriented to specific courses, which is a benefit, but the course is not the most important unit of analysis for programme improvement. The development seminars were not described in any detail, although the results were reportedly valuable. It is stated that students participate, but unclear how, if at all, in addition to course opinion assessments.

Recommendations

- This programme presents a rich opportunity for a student who wants to become a professional social worker in Estonia. It is recommended that the structure and presentation of the programme be simplified, using some narrative explanation when necessary, and that the points above be covered.
- Feedback and evaluation could be more systematically undertaken. Feedback appears to be at best loosely related to programme outcomes, and more oriented to specific courses, which is a benefit, but the course is not the most important unit of analysis for programme improvement. This would provide an opportunity to consider the relationship between development seminars, employer and student engagement.
- Ensure wide involvement of external groups in systematic evaluation. This should include students, employers, alumni as well as service users and carers.
- The presentation of some data with analysis and interpretation due to the development of the study programme would be very helpful. The phrase “determination of study programme position in the new structure of the university” (Action plan section) has a deadline of the summer of 2015. It is unclear what this means specifically, and the question of the state of progress on this topic is appropriate to address at this point.
- There should be a clear and specific plan for gaining student feedback and making use of it. It is unclear from the document how this has occurred. The numerical figures (scale of student opinion of courses) would be much more meaningful if the scale was presented.

MA programme:

Comments

The objectives and learning outcomes (curriculum results and study results in the language of the self study) are stated, and they are generally clear.

Strengths

- MA Social work study programme tries to meet the needs of “fast changing society” including the national and international demands of social work profession.
- The programme looks for the new ways in widening the choices for graduates’ employment.
- The programme emphasises the importance of international cooperation and maintains close contacts with European countries (especially Finland) on teachers and students level.

Areas for improvement

- MA programme offers entry to all students, including those who do not have a first cycle degree in Social Work. Those, who are from different backgrounds must take a compulsory course “Introduction to Social Work”. They can take electives on social work topics. The grades of BA level studies are not counted in admission and it seems that all candidates are considered as equal. There is a scope to differentiate the students experience by taking into account factors such as prior learning and assessment of informal learning acquired in practice.
- The Social Services study programme group includes both Social work (MA) and Social work (BA) study programme. It is indicated in the SER that “...the social work master’s studies is a unique study programme, which allows the training of social work experts and professional social workers with a specialisation on narrower field of social work”. The team read and heard that both (BA and MA) study programmes include some similar curriculum aims, modules (rehabilitation, health care), and courses with the same or very similar title. Overlap and repetition was confirmed by students (attributed to the need to cover material in the MA programme for direct entrants). The relationship and articulation between these two study programmes could be more clearly defined.
- The contents of some modules could be more focused on the topic of the module (“Gerontological Social Work”). Some courses, as very important for social work studies, could be included into compulsory courses group.
- Study programme aims, results and courses’ study results refer to social worker’s micro-level skills development. However, the learning outcomes of “Practical social work and professional growth” (6 ECTS) course (as we understood, it is the only field placement course), are orientated exclusively to macro-level social work. The study programme should include the ways in which students acquire practice skills working directly with the clients. Identification of these would also facilitate work based learning and recognition of informal learning.
- The programme-related activities consist of achieving interdisciplinarity, the compliance of courses with labour market requirements, and implementation of changes according to student feedback and meetings. It was clear that these

activities took place; however, the team could find no clear audit trail that linked these feedback activities to programme development. Clear and specific data about labour market needs and requirements and an overview of the process and content of students' feedback, including ways and means of evaluation results and their influence would emphasise and systematise internal quality assurance processes.

Recommendations

- Explain and clarify the connection between the BA and MA social work study programmes.
- Entry requirements should be revisited and based on the potential ability to achieve programme learning outcomes and based on applicant's prior experience either of work or study. Possibilities of credit and exemptions, as work based learning based on these factors should be considered.
- Review the contents of all elective modules presented.
- Review the content of the study programme due to requirements of micro-level practice skills.
- Develop a plan for comprehensive and continuous feedback from students, employers, alumni, and other stakeholders such as service users. The plan should include data that can be presented to those affected by the programme. The plan should encompass the learning outcomes and objectives as well as course by course information.
- Present some data analysis and interpretations about the use of feedback from students, employers and alumni in developing MA Social work programme.
- Link all feedback, monitoring and data collection activities to produce a plan for a coherent internal quality assurance process.

Resources

Comments

The resources in general seem sufficient to sustain a good learning environment. This is supported by a good access to free Wi-Fi, bright and pleasant class- and seminar rooms. Particularly appealing is the library, which appears as a vibrant (although silent) milieu, with its generous access to chairs and places to work uninterrupted.

Strengths

- The Institute of Social Work is located in the new Astra building, which constitutes a modern and aesthetically appealing learning environment.
- The library is well equipped with study literature and theoretical resources relevant to the programmes.
- The use of Moodle is well integrated in the educational programme.

Areas for improvement

- As student groups are sometimes large, and the number of spacious classrooms is limited, classes can sometime be crowded.
- The combination of expensive international literature, few translations and strict copying rules means that access to study literature can be a challenge.
- Lecturers refer to a limited amount of funding to attend international conferences.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the cooperation across academic libraries in order to increase accessibility and range of relevant international literature.
- Support lecturers further in their search for funding to attend international conferences.

Teaching and learning

Comments

Modern teaching methods used by teachers; e-teaching, interactive seminars, group seminars, case analysis, role plays, video and discussions, problem-orientated approach, project-based work, discussion of students with different background.

Teachers themselves decide on the methods they use. Students' feedback is very important.

BA programme:

Strengths

- A number of strong points are described including flexible approaches, an assertion of the use of modern teaching methods, a focus on learning outcomes and the availability of mobility experiences.
- Individual teachers have introduced interactive innovative approaches, supported by development sessions from the university. The teachers the team met showed great enthusiasm for their teaching and often used their own time for development activities.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching and learning section is described in the SER in a way that lacks coherence or an apparent systematic approach, several paragraphs contain a number of unrelated topics, which make the identification of strengths not as clear as it could be.
- It is clear that modern teaching methods are used; however, an overall development plan and clearer governance of teaching and learning would bring coherence to this. The examples the team heard were mainly interactive methods or methods based on electronic study environments or logs. What needs to be developed further is the move from learning to teaching, the development of learning outcomes, the adaptation of teaching and learning approaches to meet learning outcomes and the

alignment of appropriate assessment to test achievement of learning outcomes. This could be framed in a way that emphasizes student centred learning.

- Staff development is evident and it would support development to see a structured plan that demonstrates continual development and review of teaching and learning approaches. This may exist as there is some discussion of the use and importance of feedback but it is rather scant.
- There is a good description of the allocation of student supervisors for thesis work and it would be beneficial to develop a clear view about the balance between the professional skills and research skills, i.e. are the students taught to be mini researchers or practitioners.

Recommendations

- Elaborate the description of teaching and learning to show the continual review and development of teaching and learning approaches.
- Develop a teaching and learning strategy that includes governance and internal quality assurance mechanisms to assist continual improvement, consistency across courses and systematically develop modern teaching and learning approaches.

MA programme:

Comments:

The SER provides a good account of all of the standards, well written and easily understandable.

Strengths

- There is clear evidence that various forms of evaluation and other measurements are used to evaluate and review the teaching and learning within the programme. These include the evaluation of learning outcomes by students, the workload and attribution of ECTS and the study programme council. The study programme involves industry practitioners in the evaluation of learning outcomes, field practice and thesis defence.
- A developing approach towards academic misconduct is outlined and this appears to be a useful tool which has both an educational and a fraud detection approach.
- There is a clear account which identifies strengths and areas for improvement of the programme and offers a good basis for internal quality assurance.

Areas for improvement

- The SER outlines areas for improvement. This demonstrates a reflective approach and this should continue with clear focus. A more systematic approach would strengthen further internal quality processes.
- Better distribution of study load during study and exam sessions (at the same time the staff understand that periodic peaks in study load are inevitable in the current study form).
- Better interrelation of courses (including, that the courses should complement each other better) and more practical speciality examples (and/or greater involvement of industry experts in studies, beside the principle lecturer)

- Conducting certain courses in electronic form, either entirely or partially, and taking exams in an electronic study environment (at least partially).
- There is no evidence of mobility opportunities or internationalization and this is flagged up as an area for improvement. It would be good to see a plan of how this will proceed.
- Clearer information about the flexibility of delivery and the contemporary learning methods would be helpful
- There is little information about assessment methods.

Recommendations

- Elaborate the description of teaching and learning to show the continual review and development of teaching and learning approaches.
- Develop a teaching and learning strategy that includes governance and internal quality assurance mechanisms to assist continual improvement, consistency across courses and systematically develop modern teaching and learning approaches.
- Develop an approach to internationalisation which has clear goals and embeds global perspectives in the curriculum

Teaching staff

Strengths

- There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- Overall student assessment on teaching skills of teaching staff is positive.
- Recognised members including foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners in teaching the study programme.
- The teaching staff is engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- The teaching staff has a balance of experienced and new lecturers who endeavour to bring new teaching methods and international perspectives on social work which could contribute to social work as an innovative force in society rather than a conservative one.
- Teaching staff is involved in the development of international contacts and perspectives.
- Teaching staff is supported to develop new teaching methods. Twice a year lecturers meet to discuss.

Areas for improvement

- Lecturers are supported to develop modern teaching skills and develop new perspectives on social work, but this is only on a voluntary basis.
- New PhD's need to be developed to strengthen the theoretical underpinning of the programme, but this is not evident given the tremendous workload of the lecturers. As such, a lot of pressure is put on a visiting professor to strengthen the theoretical base.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the development of support of the teaching skills of lecturers and making these less non-committal.
- Developing an explicit policy to keep open research time for the lecturers, for example through rationalisation of the programme.

Students

Strengths

- Selection allows to take only the most motivated students.
- In master level studies the drop-out rate is low.
- Students also have the possibility to take extracurricular courses either at the same university or in other Estonian universities as free elective courses.
- The University helps and supports students in various ways. The university provides counseling session and information sessions for students at the start of and during the semester, partial tuition fee reductions and supplementary allowances.

Areas for improvement

- At bachelor level the students' drop-out rate is high, taking into account that in this programme there is a selection of the most motivated students.
- BA: "2010-2014 81 students have cancelled their studies because of financial insecurity, work, family issues and health problems." (Total enrolment of students since 2011 is 334).
- MA: "In 2013/2014 the closed study programme was converted into an open study programme, which is available for students with a bachelor's level of education (or equivalent) in any field."

Recommendations

- Produce a plan to tackle the high drop out rate in the BA.
- Take steps at recruitment to ensure that students who are likely to complete are accepted.
- Review the open access to the MA programme based on discussion regarding programme identity.

1.2.5. Social Pedagogy and Child Protection (MA)

Study programme and study programme development

Comments:

The programme is based on the Estonian practise to combine school-based social pedagogy and child protection. There is a high demand for social pedagogy professionals in the society due to increasing rate of problems among the children and young people. A new law on child protection requires a master degree for field workers in child protection.

Strengths

- The students are educated to combine resources in the immediate local network to prevent social problems among school children and to alleviate problems when they occur.
- The students learn also how to empower the children.
- The development of the study programme is firmly based on legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards.
- The programme is developed in close connection with needs of the labour market.
- Professional standard for social pedagogy and child protection are used as a guiding principle to construct the programme.
- The study programme development takes into account feedback from employers, alumni and other stakeholders. There is also a system of collecting regularly feedback from students.

Areas for improvement

- The students come sometimes with bachelor degrees from fields far away from social pedagogy in particular or social sciences in general. It was not clear how the programme guarantees that all the master students have the basic understanding of social pedagogy in order to deepen their knowledge of the area in the MA programme. If the courses are constructed to accommodate the needs of those with no previous knowledge of social pedagogy and child protection, it is not clear why this is an MA programme instead of a bachelor programme. In this respect, the content and structure of the study programme are not consistent with its objectives and learning outcomes.
- It is was not possible to get a clear idea from the self-assessment report or through the interviews what is the value base in terms of theoretical understanding of social pedagogy and child protection. It was also not clear what is the guiding principle in the programme to combine social pedagogy and child protection. Different parts of the study programme did not seem to form a coherent whole. The need for a master's programme combining social pedagogy and child protection comes from the realities on the division of professional work in the Estonian society, but as an academic master's level programme there should be more theoretical coherence in the way the programme approaches the two material topics – social pedagogy and child protection.
- As academic fields, social pedagogy and child protection are specific areas of competence, and therefore it was not obvious how competence in both fields will be achieved within the framework of the programme. Are the students qualified to work in child protection once they graduate? The Ministry of Social Affairs offers professional training for future child protection workers. Could this training be included into the programme?
- In terms of academic identity, the students had poor theoretical understanding of social pedagogy. There was also a lack of critical approach to central concepts of social work such as empowerment.

Recommendations

- Up-date the admission procedures to require previous studies of social work for all the applicants.
- Develop the programme around theoretical understanding and professional values which combine both social pedagogy and child protection.
- Work together with the Ministry of Social Affairs to incorporate all required competences and qualifications of child protection workers in the course programme.

Resources

Comments:

The resources in general seem sufficient to sustain a good learning environment. This is supported by a good access to free Wi-Fi, bright and pleasant class- and seminar rooms and a beautiful library.

Strengths

- The Institute of Social Work, where the programme of Social Pedagogics and Child Protection belongs to, is located in the new Astra building, which constitutes a modern and aesthetically appealing learning environment.
- Particularly appealing is the library, which appears as a vibrant (although silent) milieu, with its generous access to chairs and places to work uninterrupted. The library is also well equipped with study literature and theoretical resources relevant. Students have access to a number of electronic (including licensed) databases.
- The use of Moodle is well integrated in the educational programme.

Areas for improvement

- As student groups are sometimes large, and the number of spacious classrooms is limited, classes can sometimes be crowded.
- The combination of expensive international literature, few translations and strict copying rules means that access to study literature can be a challenge.
- Lecturers refer to a limited amount of funding to attend international conferences.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the cooperation across academic libraries in order to increase accessibility and range of relevant international literature.
- Support lecturers further in their search for funding to attend international conferences.

Teaching and learning

Strengths

- New and interactive teaching methods are applied.

- New perspectives on social work are introduced, also by new young lecturers.
- The programme is flexible and can be adapted to the specific situation of working students, through the use of distance learning.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment practice of the diverse lecturers could be more coherent and underpinned by a common framework.
- The perspective on the way the programme deals with the very diverse background of the bachelor students (law, social media, etc.) could be more underpinned by a clear and coherent perspective on the way the targeted competences of the master programme are realised given this diversity.
- The internationalisation of the programme can be strengthened. As it is difficult for (working) students to go abroad, a more thorough programme of internationalisation at home might be worked out.

Recommendations

- Keep supporting lecturers to apply new teaching methods.
- Developing a clear assessment programme.
- Developing a clear and transparent plan to deal with students with a diversity of bachelor degrees from other fields in realising the competences of the master programme.
- Developing a coherent plan for internationalisation at home.

Teaching staff

Comments

The teaching staff has generally high academic competence. The only lecturer without a PhD degree is likely to complete within a short time.

Strengths

- Student assessment on teaching skills is positive. Teachers are said to utilise a variety of modern teaching methods.
- The staff frequently utilizes Erasmus mobility programme to visit and teach at other European universities. Several teachers have extensive international networks and have had longer stays at foreign universities.

Areas for improvement

- Despite high and relevant competence among teaching staff, there seems to be a lack of specialized academic competence in profile areas such as social pedagogy and child protection.
- Despite frequent contact with foreign universities, the programme seems to lack stable relationships with international partners within core areas.

Recommendations

- Take affirmative steps to strengthen the competence within social pedagogy and child protection.
- Seek to establish more stable relationships with international academic communities within profile areas that can strengthen the self-critical eye on the programme and be partners in national and international research applications.

Students

Comments

The programme is popular among the students. Interest in the programme is partly derived from the fact that a new child protection acts comes in the force beginning 2016, and it requires all child protection workers employed by the municipalities to have a master degree. That allows the programme to guarantee that the student places are filled with motivated and capable students also in the future. In 2014 only 30 were selected from 168 applicants. The number of entrants has remained fairly stable (from 17 annual entrants to 30 entrants between 2009 and 2014). This is the only programme in its field in the country, where there is a growing need for professionals in the municipalities.

Strengths

- Students have a number of relevant competencies and qualifications from previous studies and work experience. The students are highly motivated. The motivation is tested in the admission procedure where a motivational letter is requested from the applicants.
- Employment rate of graduates is high. Alumni and their employers are satisfied with their professional preparation and social competencies.

Areas for improvement

- Only a small share of students complete the programme in standard time (2014 as low as 14%). There is also a high rate of dropouts. The students and faculty give family and work obligations as main reason for poor outcomes. The programme has addressed the problems in reconciling studies with work and family life by offering e-Learning opportunities together with flexible study schedule.
- Academic mobility in the programme is very low. Only a small share of students study at other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as part of their studies.
- Students' wishes to develop counselling skills and complete studies in various therapy studies are not always easy to accommodate into an academic master level programme.

Recommendations

- Work together with students and employers to help students to complete their studies in nominal time.
- Emphasise the academic nature of the programme to meet students' requests for even more practical orientation in teaching.

- Promote academic mobility through making more visible the opportunity to get credits from courses completed in other universities in Estonia or abroad.

2. Assessment report of SPG at University of Tartu

Study programme group	<i>Social Sevices</i>
Higher education institution	University of Tartu
Study programmes	Leisure Time Manager-Teacher (Prof HE) Youth Work (Prof HE) Social Work and Rehabilitation Administration (Prof HE) Social Work and Social Policy (MA)

2.1. Introduction and general findings

Comments

The team assessed four study programmes at the University of Tartu. The team visited the main campus of the University in Tartu, where a Social Work and Social Policy programme is taught; the team also visited TU Narva College (for the assessment of Youth Work programme) and TU Viljandi Culture Academy (for the assessment of Leisure Time Manager-Teacher programme). Due to time restrictions, it was unfortunately not possible to travel to Pärnu for the assessment of the Social Work and Rehabilitation Administration programme; however, the Director and other representatives of the UT Pärnu College kindly met with the team in Tartu, which was much appreciated, and some interviews were conducted on Skype.

The team found that there were enthusiastic teachers in all programmes and they were offered good developmental opportunities by the university. The university also offered a good quality assurance framework for the programmes which utilised feedback from employers and students. The team felt that some further development and systematic approach would strengthen the internal quality assurance system.

The team noted the strength of the local colleges and the support they received from the University. These were valued by students and employers.

Strengths

- Good support for development of teaching and learning
- Utilisation of feedback from employers and students

Areas for improvement

- Quality assurance processes could be more systematic
- A programme for development of teaching and learning skills is offered. However, teachers indicate that this is undertaken in addition to their normal workload and is

at the discretion of individual teachers. This means that only the most motivated teachers undertake these activities and ways to provide more comprehensive coverage could be considered

Recommendations

- Further develop the internal quality assurance system
- Provide an overall plan for the development of teaching and learning

2.2. Strengths and Areas for Improvement of Study Programmes by Assessment Areas

2.2.1. Leisure Time Manager-Teacher (Prof HE)

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths

- The atmosphere and attitude at Viljandi Culture Academy is extraordinary: creative, motivated, dedicated. It is carried by a convincing vision, which in return is underpinned by a feasible strategy.
- The programme has proven to be an excellent preparation for youth work practice – several stakeholders (including employers and alumni) commented on the readiness of graduates very positively. The specialisations within the programme are well conceptualised and operationalised.
- The new focus on entrepreneurship is a welcome addition to the programme.
- Several international projects have been introduced to support creative ways for learning on international level for both students and teaching staff involved.

Areas for improvement

- While the curriculum already steers into new directions, the programme should be reconsidered more holistically in light of the move away from school-based youth work towards community-based youth work. Some elements of the vision for the programme, such as the need to strengthen intergenerational approaches in youth work, have yet to be translated into the curriculum.
- Students admit they struggle with academic writing and especially writing their final thesis.

Recommendations

- It is recommended to align the study programme, including its name, presentation and content, more clearly with the changing occupational profiles of graduates, who work less frequently as leisure time managers in schools and increasingly work as youth workers in diverse community work settings. These

changes could also serve to increase the internationalisation of the study programme.

- The experiential approach to learning is an excellent feature of the programme that should be maintained and further developed, paying specific attention to enhancing analytical elements that help to situate the experiential phases and strengthen the learning-to-learn-competence of students.
- In line with these new directions, also additional courses should be introduced, among others on the self-management of youth workers as self-directed professionals; counselling and other ways of working with youth with special needs; on using intergenerational approaches in youth work; and on using high-tech environments creatively in youth work.
- Although the study programme is rather practically oriented, students should be able to develop their academic writing and research competence as well.

Resources

Strength

- The creative environment provided by the Academy is perfect for the approach chosen in the programme, providing the right atmospheric environment for students and lecturers alike.

Areas for improvement

- The library has no section on youth work, the books that exist are distributed across several categories and hard to trace. Moodle system has not been used properly to provide students with e-materials and links to e-resources, academic staff use different electronic systems instead.
- Both students and teaching staff have criticised the classrooms not to be most appropriate for many of the experiential learning approaches. However this situation is hoped to be improved with the extended opening of the new building of the College in future.

Recommendation

- The Academy should obtain and make available a varied body of national and international literature on youth work in a curated section specifically on youth work.

Teaching and learning

Strength

- Modern teaching methods are used, and the process of teaching is responsive and can be adapted to changing learning needs as well as the evolving professional profile of youth workers.

Area for improvement

- There are a number of courses with overlapping contents, and very few courses that students critiqued as isolated and disconnected, not well responding to their learning needs. Some of the new directions the programme is taking should be reflected transversally throughout the programme and such inconsistencies corrected.

Recommendations

- The Academy should review all courses for their theoretical as well as practical relevance for the programme and expected occupational profile of graduates, taking also steps to reduce overlaps between the courses offered.
- The curriculum should be revisited to explore how aspects such as entrepreneurial thinking and intergenerational approaches could be developed as cross-cutting themes.

Teaching staff

Strengths

- The level of competence and motivation among staff are excellent, they have as well expressed their dedication to contribute to further development of the study programme and work towards strengthening the common vision and drafting respective strategies.
- The overall student assessment of teaching skills is very positive. The teaching staff is connected to peers in and beyond the country.

Area for improvement

- The teaching staff has needs for competence development that should be considered. Teaching staff need support in translating their teaching specialisations into research activities.

Recommendations

- Teaching staff should be supported to use available international training opportunities, with a particular focus on the skills development needs identified by them, including how to deal with students with learning challenges and how to prepare students for working with young people with special needs. Newcomers among teaching staff have expressed their need for strengthening their competences on teaching and learning as such.
- Teaching staff should also be supported in developing research activities around their teaching specialisation, including cooperation projects with other universities within and beyond Estonia. As part of such cooperation, more English courses should be solicited.

Students

Strength

- The programme attracts highly motivated and successful students. Feedback from employers and alumni to professional preparation of students is generally positive.

Areas for improvement

- International mobility is complicated, owing to the unique approach of the programme.
 - Dropout rates, while lower than in some other youth work programmes in Estonia, remain too high. The majority of students need to work to finance their studies, which the programme currently does not accommodate sufficiently.
 - Employers have expressed some critics regarding the students lacking competences to work with youth with special needs as well as the fact that students tend to operate better in pedagogical dimensions of youth work but seem to need more support to accommodate their role also to other dimensions of the field, especially in open youth work settings.
- These points should also be addressed in further development of the curricula in line with the recommendations above.

Recommendations

- The Academy already seeks to strengthen international mobility of students, and should do so even more: not only would the programme and its students benefit, but other programmes and universities will benefit from being exposed to the approach of the Academy as well.
- Students would as well benefit from greater co-operation with other institutions offering youth work courses in Estonia.
- While it is clear that current higher education policies effectively bar universities from offering part-time studies, the Academy should, nonetheless, consider how it can better support the vast majority of students who need to work to finance their studies, including options for recognising work-based learning.

2.2.2. Youth Work (Prof HE)

Study programme and study programme development

Strength

- The programme responds to a clear regional and national need for youth workers able to work in Russian and Estonian, hence the programme aims to support language-learning as one of the specific features. It is well embedded in the region and cooperation with youth work institutions is strong. The facilities of the Narva College offer an excellent learning environment for students.

Areas for improvement

- The idea of the study programme with specific focus on youth work in different language communities in Estonia is very favourable as such, however the worryingly low number of graduates questions the real impact of this study programme. Furthermore, further development and sustainability of the study programme seems to be strongly hindered by lack of teaching staff with specific youth field competences (the aspect to be further elaborated in coming chapters).
- The curriculum needs to be further developed to respond to the growing diversity of occupational profiles in the youth sector, which extend beyond classical youth work and now include both youth policy and youth research foci, ranging from local to national level. It is particularly important to ensure that youth work graduates from Russian-speaking communities have the qualification to take on these developing roles.
- The curriculum lacks consistency in its approach to youth work, in part in response to available resources and teaching staff. It should be revised to confidently and strategically introduce all aspects of youth work already from the first year of studies, and to link theory and practice of youth work more consistently.
- In addition, materials presented to assessment committee have demonstrated remarkable inconsistencies in terms of logic and content of the modules but also on the level of course programmes regarding objectives, expected learning outcomes, content and supportive literature in several cases, such as making students familiar with the legal system of Estonia and with the legislation in the field of youth work, or introducing students to the youth policy framework of the country etc. However the programme managers claimed these have already been revised and/or are undergoing revision currently. Thus the efficiency of these changes remains to be seen.
- Despite a strong focus of the curricula on practical skills, employers, alumni and students have all commented on how unprepared students are for youth work practice. According to SER “The weaknesses of the curriculum include graduates’ insufficient practical skills” (pg. 11) and “The employers’, alumni’s and students’ feedback has revealed that the curriculum provides students with a good theoretical base of knowledge but develops rather insufficiently students’ practical skills, which are essential for the training of youth workers.” (pg. 28). While in SER the College also admits having introduced development plan for improvements in this respect, these changes do not seem to have had effects yet as same critics has been mentioned during interviews. This is of concern, especially for a professional higher education programme, and needs to be resolved.

Recommendations

- It is recommended to conceptualise the programme based on competences (rather than only knowledge and/or skills), and reformulate curriculum and its contents accordingly to align the programme more coherently with the growing diversity of occupational profiles in the youth sector and youth worker professional standard; to extend the curriculum to cover the diversity of the

youth field (*noortevaldkond*), and to include both youth work (*noorsootöö*) and youth policy (*noortepoliitika*) in the curriculum, as this is the approach reflected also in the latest development plan for the youth field on national level 2014-2020.

Recognising the motivation of the College to develop the curriculum in line with the professional standard of youth worker on national level, the Committee would, however, like to call the College not only to continue to do so but also to further develop the curriculum in line with other aspects mentioned above.

- In addition, the curriculum needs to be revised such that the aspirations of all modules align with the courses offered within them and to strengthen youth-work specific courses in the first year of studying.
- Further attention should be drawn to terminology used throughout the curricula, to guarantee alignment with principles and values of modern youth field, including avoiding stigmatising terms like “Restless and aggressive children” (*Rahutud ja agressiivsed lapsed*) in the course title etc.

Resources

Strength

- The new building of UT Narva College offers an excellent learning environment for students and working environment for lecturers, including modern technical equipment and a well-equipped library. The programme draws on a variety of contexts, including partner organisations and institutions.

Area for improvement

- The availability and usage of international youth work material, both in English and in Russian, could be improved.

Recommendation

- The College should obtain and make available a varied body of international literature on youth work.

Teaching and learning

Strength

- The links to youth field practice and co-operation with external partners is strong and well-used aspect to enrich the teaching and learning within the curriculum. As a general approach, modern teaching methods are used.

Areas for improvement

- Although modern teaching methods have been introduced, there are number of courses that take a rather pragmatic approach or seem to even misuse the

variety of methods without a well-defined educational reasoning behind and thus steer away from the intended learning outcomes quite remarkably. For example, in the course “Management of youth work” (pp. 125, 140), much stronger emphasis should be made on youth work concept as such and its “essentials” (aim and objectives, core principles, structural organization, legislation and other key-documentation determining youth work and its developments in Estonia) and in this light – as a first step - the objectives, learning outcomes and course description revised. Furthermore, the current assignments as presented in SER (pp. 125-128), do not allow to understand the reasons behind such methodological choices, incl. how can this approach as a whole guarantee that the objectives of the course are met. The list of planned assignments is far too mixed and ambitious time-wise, not leaving much opportunity to fulfill them in good quality by students and/or have sufficient time for learning reflections. Also, considering that the course takes place on 1st semester, how are students able to conduct a professional self-evaluation in line with the occupational standard?

As another example, the logic of orientating the narrow field module of policy also on project management and communication skills (pg. 122) is a rather unjustified approach. To better support the objectives of the study programme, that module might need much stronger links to youth policy instead.

- Learning mobility is very limited and is mainly taking place in the form of students enrolling themselves into practical placements in other regions. Mobility could more systematically promote placements abroad.

Recommendations

- The College should assess all offered modules and courses against the intended (to be revised) competence profile and learning outcomes and ensure consistency, incl. between syllabuses and reality.
- The College should identify ways to aid teaching staff to sharpen the alignment of intended learning outcomes and educational methodology used to achieve these outcomes
- The College should extend its European and international learning mobility offers.

Teaching staff

Strength

- The programme utilises external lectures, including from other universities, to teach on the programme. The internal staff met has demonstrated very strong enthusiasm and motivation to contribute to the quality of the study programme.

Areas for improvement

- It is problematic that out of the teaching staff the Committee was able to meet at interviews, majority did not seem to have specific youth work competence and/or background. For sustainability of the programme it would be helpful to

build youth field capacity and expertise among full-time staff much more strongly.

- Participation in international mobility and research of teaching staff is low.

Recommendations

- Current teaching staff should be trained to design a curriculum based on competence profiles to aid the revision of the curriculum in alignment with modern concepts of youth work, growing diversity of occupational profiles in the youth sector and the youth worker professional standard.
- The College should consider adding full-time members of staff with expertise and competences directly linked to the youth field (youth work and youth policy). Teaching staff should be encouraged and supported to use more of the available international opportunities, both for mobility and research.

Students

Strength

- The programme attracts a reasonable number of students (as of November 2014, 198 students were studying in the programme), who seem both motivated and capable.

Areas for improvement

- Dropout rates are however very high, and the number of graduates is extremely low (2012 – 2; 2013 – 6; 2014 – 5).
- International mobility of students is very low.
- Connections and cooperation between students at the three institutions offering youth work programmes are weak.

Recommendations

- One of the biggest hurdles preventing students from graduation is the requirement of the College to submit their final thesis in Estonian. It is recommended to revisit that policy and allow students to choose a form of examination that is not a thesis (oral examination, project portfolio etc), and to allow students to submit their final thesis either in English, Estonian, or Russian. Being able to work with young people in Estonian is a useful requirement and laudable ambition, but this does not necessarily have to extend to handling a highly stressful examination in a specific language. The need to submit the final thesis in Estonian has been brought up as one of the strongest obstacles for graduation during the interviews both by students as well as by employers/alumni representatives. Having respect to national regulations and the ambition of the College to prepare students for demands of labor market as best as possible, we would still see the potential to rather focus on further improvement of active language learning during the studies and consider that opportunity to master writing the final thesis (besides Estonian) also either in English or Russian, would not limit the further career options of students, especially considering the initial aim and

specific focus of the study programme in Narva College. We welcome the fact that also other forms of final examination have been introduced.

- Another reason for the low graduation rates is that students frequently find good employment in the youth sector while studying, and do not complete their studies hence. While it is clear that current higher education policies regarding funding make it problematic and are a disincentive to offering part-time studies, the university should nonetheless consider how it can better support the vast majority of students who need to work to finance their studies, including options for recognising work-based learning.
- Students should be encouraged and supported to use more of the available international opportunities.
- Information exchange and co-operation between students on youth work study programmes in Estonia, Europe and internationally needs to be strengthened.

2.2.3. Social Work and Rehabilitation Administration (Prof HE)

Study programme and study programme development

Comments

Launch and the development of the study programme is based on the requirements of University, National and European standards and guidelines.

Strengths

- The objectives and learning outcomes of the overall curriculum are stated. The objectives and learning outcomes of modules are clear, appropriate and achievable. Contents of majority modules are consistent with their objectives and learning outcomes.
- Good work is evident in making use of feedback to improve many aspects of the study programme. According to the SER, programme development mostly is based on students' feedback, experience of cooperation with international partners is included. Students' and employers' representatives take an active part in curricula committee.
- The specific strengths, weaknesses and plans for programme development, described in the SER, were raised as the important issues by managers and teachers during the visit at university. The assessment team got an impression that people implementing programme take an active role in the study programme development.

Areas for improvement

- The Self-Evaluation Report notes that "The goal of the Department of Social Work Administration is to prepare highly qualified specialists for social work and rehabilitation administration. Students obtain high-level knowledge and skills for providing and managing rehabilitation and social welfare services including social processes and entrepreneurship in general" (p. 12). However, it is unclear what

the study programme focuses on: service provision or service administration. As we understood from meetings with target groups, the line of „service provision“ is emphasized. So there is some inconsistency with the title of the programme and reality. We agree that students must know the content of services, but it is not the same as „to obtain high-level knowledge and skills for providing <...> social welfare services“.

- It seemed from the meeting with students and employers that orientation toward social work and client work dominate in the whole study programme. Students „chose practice placement to practice client work“ or do social work with clients already. Employers, representing students practice places, told that students do client work mostly. Teachers mentioned that both specialisations should be brought together.
- Students find own placements and specify their own objectives, but it is not clear what are the guidelines given from university, and what specific results student should achieve. During the meeting employers told that „The curriculum is very good but when students come to us they don't know what to do“. Maybe more clear and specific objectives and learning outcomes would help students make connection between theory and practice.
- Students have a possibility to give feedback for the teachers but they are not sure what changes were made according their feedback. Students think that feedback for study programme development should be given every semester.

Recommendations

- To present very clearly what this programme is trying to create and what is the image of the graduate.
- Make the objectives and learning outcomes of the programme (including all levels - overall, module, subject) more clear and consistent depending on the desired graduate outcome.
- Specify and present the objectives and learning outcomes of each placement subject. This would help students, organizations and field supervisors.
- Include new forms of study programme evaluation. Beside the forms students have to fill evaluating each course, qualitative measures (as focus group interviews) could be applied to evaluate not only separate courses but all aspects of the study programme.

Resources

Strengths

- Although the College was not visited, it appears to have a vibrant atmosphere with well-equipped library resources.
- The local atmosphere of the College is valued by students and employers.

Area for improvement

- Ensure that resource capacity is maintained during development periods.

Recommendation

- Consider ways in which local delivery of programmes can further enhance a lifelong learning approach.

Teaching and learning

Strengths

- Good consistency between SER and accounts from teachers, students and employers.
- Teaching is flexible and offered in differing formats.
- Good links with foreign universities, especially Finland.
- Support for development offered to teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The alignment between learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment is not always clear.
- Inconsistency in teaching methods used by teachers. Some use very active methods whilst others rely on reading from PowerPoint.
- Low rate of outward mobility.

Recommendations

- Produce overall plan for development of teaching and learning including governance. This should indicate constructive alignment between teaching methods, learning outcomes and assessment.
- Further develop a mentoring system to help induct new staff.

Teaching staff

Strengths

- Teaching staff are very well motivated and have adequate qualifications.
- Good awareness shown of the development needs of the programme. The team have produced a quality “to do” list.
- Students assess highly the input of most teachers.
- The University provides developmental opportunities for teachers.
- Students advise that they have opportunities to feedback and their comments are actioned.

Areas for improvement

- Take-up of development courses are left to teachers’ choice.
- Promote visiting professor programme and opportunities for staff mobility.

Recommendations

- Further develop the “to do” list into a coherent internal quality assurance process

- Facilitate ways in which development opportunities become part of workload instead of additional to it.
- Improve opportunities for staff mobility and ensure that any plans to address this are implemented and evaluated.

Students

Strengths

- Students value the opportunity to study locally.
- Employers value engagement with local students.

Areas for improvement

- Students are unclear about potential employment opportunities.
- Differences between full-time and cyclical studies are unclear.
- Students want both parts of the programme to be merged. Students should be informed of plans to do this and involved in planning
- Low international mobility.

Recommendations

- Provide clear pre course information regarding employment opportunities for students.
- Improve international mobility to national norms.
- Explore potential for work based learning and recognition of prior learning within a lifelong learning context.

2.2.4. Social Work and Social Policy (MA)

Study programme and study programme development

Comments

This is the only master level programme in Estonia, which teaches social policy. The development of the study programme is based on legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards. In addition the best quality is being strived for.

Strengths

- The combination of social work and social policy provides the students understanding of both structural factors affecting social problems and individual level solutions to those problems.
- The programme is constructed with critical reflection on how to combine theory and praxis. The theory is used to equip the students to challenge existing practices and ways of thinking in the workplaces. For this reason, the content

and structure of the study programme are consistent with its objectives and learning outcomes. The programme has the important mission to develop the critical understandings of evidence-based and reflexive practice of social work in Estonia.

- The programme has a strong international orientation with teacher and student exchange together with research cooperation with leading academic institutions in Europe.
- Being a part of a big university, the programme is able to develop inter-disciplinary curriculum. Recently, a course on how to handle aggressive media was added to the curriculum. The students are asked to give a plan for master's thesis when they seek admission in the programme.
- The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders. However, the profession of social policy analysts is not acknowledged in the professional field.

Areas for improvement

- Social policy appears as the weaker part of the curriculum. In that sense the different parts of the study programme do not form a coherent whole. Social policy should be made more visible in the programme and the students should be allowed to develop more skills in quantitative methods.
- The students are allowed to choose whether they specialize in social work or social policy. The critical question is, if they can build strong enough competence in both fields.
- The students come sometimes with bachelor degrees from fields far away from social policy and social work. It was not completely clear how the programme guarantees that all the master students have the basic understanding of these fields in order to deepen their knowledge in the masters programme.

Recommendations

- Strengthen social policy analysis in the programme, for example with enhancing inter-disciplinary cooperation with economists.
- Make clear what is required for programme participant in terms of previous knowledge on social work and social policy.

Resources

Strength

- The University of Tartu provides the programme with a vibrant academic environment, with excellent teaching materials, textbooks and other teaching aids. Resource development is sustainable.

Area for improvement

- The programme does not have a full professor position. The position would be important for the academic profile of the programme and for the development of the programme within the university administration.

Recommendation

- Continue developing adequate resources for the programme.

Teaching and learning

Strengths

- Most lecturers use new teaching methods.
- Lecturers are highly motivated to teach in a very flexible way, for instance during weekends.
- The programme is flexible and can be adapted to the specific situation of working students, through the use of distance learning.

Areas for improvement

- The perspective on the way the programme deals with the very diverse background of the bachelor students could be more underpinned by a clear and coherent perspective on the way the targeted competences of the master programme are realised given this diversity.
- Students can get compensatory courses (such as social work when this was not included in their bachelor), yet this is on a voluntary basis, which could also lead to prolongation of the study period.
- The assessment practice of the diverse lecturers could be more coherent and underpinned by a common framework.

Recommendations

- Keep supporting lecturers to apply new teaching methods.
- Develop a clear assessment programme.
- Develop a clear and transparent plan to deal with a diversity of bachelor programmes in realising the competences of the master programme.

Teaching staff

Strengths

- Teaching staff is generally well qualified to achieve the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme. Four out of nine teachers hold a PhD degree, and three more is about to finish their doctoral studies.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about the programme and appear as a close and cooperative group, actively engaged in constantly improving the programme. This includes the development of teaching-skills and learning methods.
- Students speak very positively about the teaching staff.
- The programme seems to have close cooperation with alumni and various stakeholders.
- The programme has for many years benefitted from a merited part-time visiting professor who is still active in the programme.

- The teaching staff works as an active research community. Teachers participate in joint research projects, and several teachers are extensively involved in international networks and research.

Areas for improvement

- The programme does not have a full professor position, which is unfortunate for a master programme.
- The lack of coherence between social policy and social work in the programme is reflected in tension between the need to develop social policy in the curriculum and the need to develop teachers' competence and research in social work. Academic qualifications are stronger in social policy than in social work.
- None of the teachers holds a PhD degree in social work. Also, research seems more focused on social policy or on structural issues on macro level rather than on issues concerning the relationship with beneficiaries and the delivery of social services. When students were asked what they would have liked to see improved in the programme, it was elements of social work that were highlighted – such as how to work with disabled people and immigrants.
- Although students are generally very satisfied with teaching staff, some indicate that not all teachers have the expected motivation and/or teaching skills.

Recommendations

- All possible efforts should be made to put in place a full professor in social policy and/or social work.
- The academic and research competence in social work should be strengthened as to create a better balance in the programme between the two areas of focus.

Students

Strengths

- Student places seem to be filled with motivated and ambitious students. The number of students entering the programme has increased substantially over the last couple of years, as the number of student places increased. At the last admission 24 students were admitted, which exceeds the number of student places (22).
- Students seem to have good opportunity for mobility and many of the students spend a semester as visiting students at foreign universities.
- Employment rate among alumni is very high. A survey conducted in 2013 shows that all former graduates were working, of which more than 80 percent within their area of speciality. Four of them were PhD students.
- The programme has high ranking among comparable master programmes in the country. When asked what they gain from the programme, alumni and employers highlight in particular the good theoretical knowledge of graduates.

Areas for improvement

- The number of students not completing, or at least not completing in time, is high. The number of graduate last year of registration (2013/14) was only 4, out of a cohort of 14. Only two graduated within nominal time. The results improved in the spring of 2015 but still leave room for improvement.
- Many of the entrants seem to have bachelor degrees that do not explicitly prepare them for master studies in social policy and social work. Although they have several years of study experience, the subjects and issues thought at the master programme is new to many of the students, hence impeding the progression expected in postgraduate studies. Even some of the employers emphasized this as a bit strange. This may also explain some of the low completion rate.
- Students seem to feel better prepared for social policy analysis than for social work. Some students call for better training in working with people with various challenges. This is perhaps also due to the fact that the field was new to them before entering the programme.

Recommendations

- Make a thorough analysis of the problem of completion. Management and teaching staff seem to have a rather passive approach to this problem, arguing that it is due to lack of time of students working full time while studying.
- It is likely that the problem also related to a number of other factors, such as the quality of teaching and supervision, the coherence of the programme, the competence of students entering the programme, etc. It may even be the case that the commonality of using long time has weakened the norm of completing within nominal time.
- Establish criteria for admission that correspond with the progression expected when moving from graduate to postgraduate level. This means defining the particular competences required to enter the particular master programme and point at available courses that bachelors who are not eligible can take in order to meet those requirements.
- To meet the expectation of a (combined) master in social work and social policy, we recommend seeking a better balance between the two areas. It may require increasing the mandatory elements of each study area, so as to secure a satisfactory amount of each, and perhaps to strengthen the social work teaching in the programme, which appears to be the weakest part.

3. Assessment report of SPG at Lääne-Viru College

Study programme group	<i>Social Services</i>
Higher education institution	Lääne-Viru College
Study programme (Prof HE)	Social Work

3.1. Introduction and general findings at study programme group level

Comments

There is an increasing need for social work professionals in Estonia, and Lääne-Viru College is the only institution in Estonia to offer higher education in social work without university affiliation. Social work programme has the highest number of students in the College.

Strengths

- The staff consists of highly motivated, engaged and competent staff.
- The students are engaged and highly motivated.
- The programme is very strongly embedded in the local context and the College has a strong local identity.
- The College has excellent facilities for higher education with beautiful surroundings, ICT connections, an excellent (yet small) library and other resources.

Areas of Improvement

- The strong local and practice identity might overshadow the social work identity of the programme. Local identity and emphasis on praxis are issues to be cherished, but there is a need to make the social work identity more distinct, which is based on theories of social work and social policy together with the value base attached to these disciplines.
- Students were not able to give a clear picture of what social work in Lääne-Viru College is, for example: What is the role of social work as innovative force in the area and in the country? Or: What is the difference between social work and social care?

Recommendations

- It would be wise to give more weight to contextual and theoretical definition of social work.
- We support the on-going evolution of Lääne-Viru social work curriculum towards larger course modules. In the process, the theoretical foundations could be strengthened.
- We also support the development where people with PhD would be nominated to special positions of professional and academic leadership in the programme.

3.2. Strengths and Areas for Improvement of the Study Programme by Assessment Areas

3.2.1. Social Work (Prof HE)

Study programme and study programme development

Strengths

- There is an increasing need for social work professionals in Estonia. This is the only institution in Estonia to offer higher education in social work without university affiliation. Social work programme has the highest number of students in the institution.
- The programme is embedded in the local context and the school has a strong local identity. In this sense the development of the study programme is based on development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards.
- The College is determined to develop the programme as an independent institution. The programme leaders are convinced that it is better to stay independent (not merge with another higher education institution), since there are disturbing experiences from affiliations where important programmes have been closed down.
- There is a clear focus on practical side of social work with strong emphasis on internships, practical methods and client centred approach. The programme offers options to specialize in work with children, the elderly and mental problems, and most recently in entrepreneurship and social work. The students have the opportunity to reflect upon what they are doing in the field.

Areas for improvement

- It is possible that the strong local identity is overshadowing the social work identity of the programme. Local identity and emphasis on praxis are issues to be cherished, but there is a need to make clearer the social work identity which is based on theories of social work and social policy together with the value base attached to these disciplines. The students were not able to give clear picture of what social work is in Lääne-Viru collage, for example what is the role of social work as innovative force in the area and in the country. In this respect the content and structure of the study programme were not consistent with its objectives and learning outcomes. Different parts of the study programme did not form a coherent whole to cover the required academic competence in social work.
- The programme does not award bachelor degree but a higher education diploma. The diploma allows the students to continue studies in university master programmes. The heavy emphasis on praxis may not allow the student to develop required skills and competences for master level studies. This is not only question of ECT points devoted to various academic subjects but also a question of orientation in the programme. The interviewees' emphasised that the needs to develop the programme come from the working life rather than from the most recent theories

and research findings in the field. This orientation may prevent the students from realizing their role as agents of change in local and national social work contexts.

- Perhaps due to frequent evaluations the atmosphere during the site visit and programme evaluation was protective. There was no room for critical reflection essential for any institution of higher education. That was particularly visible in the lack of critical reflections on how to improve the programme.

Recommendations

- The programme should give more weight to conceptual definition of social work.
- Strengthen the theoretical foundations of social work in the development of the programme.
- Allow critical discussion on the needs to develop the programme to correspond to standards of higher education in Estonia. Do not exclude the option of possible affiliation with another institution.
- Seek international partners from university level (not only from the level of applied higher education institutions) and compare the programme content with university level programmes in other countries (for example Finland), not only from applied higher education level programmes.

Resources

Strengths

- The college has a relatively new building for teaching, with good and bright class rooms.
- Students who come from far away can stay at the student hostel, which as such supports the possibility for distance learning.
- The library is small but well equipped, with a very enthusiastic and supportive staff.
- The use of Moodle is well integrated in the educational programme.

Areas for improvement

- The question was raised if Lääne-Viru College is not too small to be sustainable in itself in the long run.
- The presence of the care laboratory can be positive; however, it raises the question to make clear what is meant by care and what is meant by social work: is 'care' work the same as 'social' work? It urges the college to profile more clearly the notion of 'social' in social work.

Recommendation

- Although the College states that the social work programme is under pressure, it should not prevent them to keep open for feasible opportunities for collaboration or integration with other programmes, as this might be necessary for the sustainability of the programme in the long run.

Teaching and learning

Strengths

- The lecturers are enthusiastic and use modern teaching methods such as role play, case studies, etc. Teaching is done with small groups of students (20-25), which makes it possible to develop participative teaching methods.
- The programme and teachers are flexible, as they combine distance learning with full-time learning.
- Students have a lot of opportunity for practice and evaluate this as very positive.
- Teachers have lively discussion and regular meetings on course contents, models, and contemporary literature.

Area for improvement

- Although lecturers interact and discuss courses, the integration of perspectives and theoretical backgrounds of the different courses is not always made visible. For instance, the relation between care work, social work, and social pedagogy lacks clarity.

Recommendation

- The theoretical and conceptual perspective of the school on social work should be made more distinctively clear (this is more than being the nurse of society) and as such also underpin more clearly the content of the different courses.

Teaching

staff

Strengths

- The programme has very enthusiastic and fairly young teaching staff that seems to constitute a good collegium and a supportive environment for students.
- Student assessment of teaching skills and teaching staff is very positive.
- Teaching staff is generally well qualified with regard to academic degrees. The vast majority hold a master's degree, of which five in social work.
- Teachers are actively involved in the local community through projects, seminars and other measures to strengthen the local anchoring of the programme.
- Several teachers seem motivated to pursue a PhD. Two teachers indicate that they will start PhD studies next autumn, which is supported by the College.
- Teaching staff seems very attached and loyal to the institution, which suggest that the programme is sustainable.

Areas for improvement

- No teaching staff holds a PhD in social work or any equivalent discipline.
- Very few of the teachers are active participants in international or even national research networks, and few are active researchers. This means that although there is a close and good professional environment, it does not constitute a research community.

Recommendations

- Create room and opportunity for staff to pursue a PhD.
- Develop a clear social work profile, including resources for networking, guest researchers, and PhD supervision.
- Seek international partners among active and relevant research communities.

Students

Strengths

- The programme is highly valued by students.
- The programme is popular among students and it requires high marks to be able to attend the programme. The number of admitted students has fallen slightly over the last three years (2012/13 – 88 students; 2013/14 – 76; 2014/15 – 75), which according to rector is due to an increase in state funded study places.
- Employment rate of alumni is high; 86% in December 2014, of which 72 percent within the speciality.
- Students are particularly excited about the focus on internship and the development of practical skills in the programme. Some students say they chose Lääne-Viru College for this reason.
- Employers are very satisfied with the professional preparation and practical competencies of alumni.

Areas for improvement

- Strong focus on the practical elements of the programme seems to have been at the expense of the theoretical orientation necessary to conceptually integrate the different elements into a comprehensive conception of social work.
- Some students seem to put the “practical reality” against theoretical knowledge, and give the former priority over the latter, which in the worst case may obstruct necessary renewal and change.
- A downplaying of the theoretical foundations of social work may impede further studies at master’s level.

Recommendations

- Find a better balance between the theoretical and practical elements in the programme and ensure that students are always able to theoretically justify their practical actions and choices.
- Add greater emphasis on exercising the critical and analytical ability of the students and communicate clearly to employers that this is an important part of education.

4. Conclusions

The aim of the assessment team was the evaluation of the the study programme group of Social Services in 3 higher education institutions: Tallinn University, University of Tartu, and Lääne-Viru College.

The team was asked to assess the conformity of the study programmes belonging to the study programme group and the instruction provided on the basis thereof to legislation and to national and international standards and/or recommendations, including 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 resources for the provision of instruction.

For a more extensive elaboration of the conclusions, see paragraph “General findings and long-term recommendations” – page 3.

In conculsion:

The study programme group of Social Services offers learning experiences for students that comply with national requirements. Teachers demonstrate an enthusiasm for their work and universities provide development opportunities for them. The programmes generally include components which provide opportunities for programme development in terms of gathering feedback and acting on this.

Areas for consideration for further improvement are:

- Consider the relationship between programmes and the fit with overall skills and knowledge development for the sector in the context of a lifelong learning framework.
- Within a lifelong learning framework consider the relationship between first and second cycle.
- Consider opportunities to maximise part time studies and utilise work based learning, recognition of prior learning and other informal learning.
- Further develop internal quality assurance processes that would support continual and timely improvement of the programmes.
- Provide clearer governance for teaching and learning with comprehensive development plans.