



ESTONIAN QUALITY AGENCY FOR
HIGHER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Report on initial assessment
of the study programme group
of
Business and Administration
PhD studies
University of Tartu

2022

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1. Introduction

Initial assessment of study programme group

The initial assessment is carried out by the Estonian Higher and Vocational Education Quality Agency (EKKA) if the higher education institution has submitted an application to the Ministry of Education and Research for the right to provide instruction in a study programme group and cycle of higher education.

When an institution applies for the right to provide instruction, it must be ascertained whether the quality of instruction meets the requirements laid down for the relevant cycle of higher education, and whether resources and sustainability are adequate for the provision of instruction.

EKKA conducts initial assessment and re-assessment using three assessment areas: **1) Quality of instruction, 2) Resources, and 3) Sustainability**. The quality of instruction is divided into three sub-areas: Study programme, Learning and teaching, and Organisation of studies. The area of Resources has also three sub-areas: Academic staff, Learning and teaching environment, and Financial resources. When assessing sustainability, assessments for quality of instruction and resources are taken into account in addition to further sustainability criteria.

In the assessment report, the committee shall determine for each assessment area, whether the quality of instruction:

- 1) Conforms to the required standard;
- 2) Partially conforms to the required standard;
- 3) Does not conform to the required standard.

As a result of the initial assessment, EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education makes a proposal to the Minister of Education and Research, whether to grant the higher education institution the right to provide instruction in the relevant study programme group and cycle of higher education; to grant the higher education institution the right to provide instruction in the relevant study programme group and cycle of higher education for one to three years; or not to grant the higher education institution the right to provide instruction in the relevant study programme group and cycle of higher education.

The initial assessment is carried out in accordance with the document “Guidelines for the initial assessment and re-assessment of study programme groups” approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education on 19.05.2020.

The initial assessment of the study programme group of Business and Administration at the University of Tartu was carried out between January – March 2022.

The following study programme was submitted for initial assessment by the University of Tartu:

Doctoral Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences, speciality Business Administration

In order to carry out the initial assessment, EKKA formed an expert panel, which includes experts from higher education institutions, outside higher education institutions and student representatives. EKKA coordinated the composition of the expert panel with the higher education institution.

The following persons formed the expert panel:

Roger Levy	Professor emeritus, LSE, UK
Martin Jes Iversen	Professor, Singapore Management University, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark
Janek Uiboupin	Hüpoteeklaen AS, Estonia
Matthew Kitching	Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Bucks Students' Union, UK & PhD Student, Lancaster University, UK

Assessment process

The assessment process was coordinated by EKKA staff – Mr Hillar Bauman

The members of the expert panel completed the initial assessment training organized by EKKA. The members of the panel worked through the documents submitted by the higher education institution. During the preparatory meeting for the assessment visit, the panel prepared a preliminary visit plan, which was coordinated with the institution and EKKA. The members of the panel agreed on the topics to be clarified on the basis of the documents submitted by the higher education institution. The division of labor and tasks were agreed in the panel for the assessment visit.

The virtual assessment visit to the higher education institution took place on 4.02.2022. The panel conducted the interviews agreed in the schedule.

EKKA sent the initial report of the panel to the higher education institution for comments on 21.02.2022.

The higher education institution submitted its comments on the initial assessment report on 4.03.2022.

When finalizing the report, the panel took into account the comments of the HEI.

The panel submitted the final report to EKKA on 14.03.2022.

Information about the University of Tartu

The UT is a public university operating under the University of Tartu Act, Higher Education Act, Organisation of Research and Development Act and its statutes and in the framework created by other legislation. The UT is the university with the most members and the largest volume of

teaching, research and development activities in Estonia, at the same time belonging to 1% of the world's most cited universities and research institutions in 12 fields of research. More than half of doctoral theses in Estonia are defended at the UT and more than half of scientific publications in Estonia are authored by UT researchers. The UT is one of the oldest universities in Northern and Eastern Europe and was founded in 1632 by King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. Under the Swedish rule, Academia Dorpatensis had four faculties: philosophy, law, theology and medicine. During the university's 390 years, teaching has been conducted in Latin, German, Russian and several other languages. On 1 December 1919, the Estonian-language University of Tartu of the Republic of Estonia was opened.

According to the University of Tartu Act, the mission of the UT is to advance science and culture, provide the possibilities for the acquisition of higher education based on the development of science and technology on the three levels of higher education in the field of the humanities, social, medical and natural science and to provide public services based on teaching, research and other creative activities.

The UT's academic structure consists of institutes and colleges of four faculties and university's institutions not affiliated to any faculty.

2. A brief summary of the results of the assessment and their justifications

EXPERT PANEL'S DECISION:

ASSESSMENT AREA	CONFORMS TO THE REQUIRED STANDARD	PARTIALLY CONFORMS TO THE REQUIRED STANDARD	DOES NOT CONFORM TO THE REQUIRED STANDARD
QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RESOURCES	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUSTAINABILITY	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

Strengths:

- The School and the University have robust formal systems and compliance is high. These are well tested, clear, fair, transparent and well understood by student users.
- The University plan has clear objectives which reflect national priorities, and the Business Administration PhD specialisation proposal is a response to those.
- The learning environment for PhD students in the School of Economics and Business Administration is very good. Physical, IT and database sources are plentiful and of a high standard.
- Student satisfaction is generally high. In particular, the system of offering defined topics to potential PhD students is viewed positively by students, students are out-performing requirements in terms of the level of engagement in international presentation mobilities and students have very good opportunities for participating in funded research projects.
- The range of accessible opportunities for students to engage in applied professional activities is good, and there are effective plans and support to enable international mobility among students.
- The data show a strong academic profile with appropriate qualifications in the relevant disciplines with a good aggregate level of research, mobility and publication activity of internationally recognised standard.
- Diversified funding components including project income from EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), international funding, national funding, life-long learning, private funding, PhD awards, national activity support, personal research grants, research baseline funding, R&D projects and R&D services.

Areas of concern and recommendations:

- At present, the articulation of the philosophical and empirical bases of 'Business Administration' and 'Economics' is both flawed and insufficiently developed for reasons we outline in Section 3.1.1.5. Moreover, we have concerns about the long-term sustainability of these two specialisations as we argue at length in Section 3.3.1.2. Therefore, we recommend that the development of the Business Administration PhD specialty is discussed together with the existing Economics programme, as from the Faculty of Social Sciences management point of view, SEBA doctoral programmes are seen together and the resource allocation is to be decided in SEBA internally. Many of the courses, the doctoral school, school resources, equipment and staff are the same for both specialisations.
- In order to widen the option range in the context of low intake numbers and the current staff resource base, collaboration with other disciplines in the Faculty and designated international university partners is encouraged.
- Faculty and School staff development plans specifying group and individual objectives with KPIs should be put in place.
- The analysis does not cover strategy for further development of the study programme. Cost-benefit analysis covering annual cost of each PhD students, general budget and further development plans of SEBA's PhD programmes need to be added.
- Our concern is that the current level of graduates, about 4 PhD graduates per year is clearly insufficient for having two separate PhD study programme specialisations in SEBA. The School has a goal to increase admissions so that Business specialty PhD students' admissions would be 6-8 per year which would increase also the current relatively low level of graduates in long-run.
- To achieve that goal, SEBA needs clear action plans for continuing to improve attractiveness of the programme for both students and staff members, financing resources, publications and study programme quality.
- Furthermore, in order to ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of the programme, a plan including key achievement milestones and KPIs should be developed to exploit the opportunities afforded by the Industrial PhD model.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Clear entry requirements for all specialisations of the programme should be stated.
- Incorporate University policy on recognition of prior accredited and experiential learning in the Admission Rules for Doctoral Studies.
- Introduce mechanisms for 'closing the feedback' loop to students after they submit evaluation forms.

3. Analysis of the PhD study programme group of Business and Administration by assessment areas and criteria

3.1. QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

3.1.1. Study programme

3.1.1.1. Launching and developing of the study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national development plans and analyses (including labour market and advisability analyses) and strives for top quality.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. In this context, the Strategic Plan of the University is quoted at length in the SEBA 'Analysis' document e.g. 'As a recognised entrepreneurial university, the University of Tartu continues to develop the enterprising spirit of its members and the society. /.../ to achieve the sustainable development goals, increase the added value of businesses and contribute to the creation and development of new research-intensive businesses' (Analysis, p7). Reference is also made to national priorities, e.g., 'Developing PhD education in this study program group is also important to achieve Estonia's strategic plans for 2021-2035. According to the documents provided (in Estonian) by the Ministry of Education and Research at <https://www.hm.ee/et/TAIE-2035> knowledge transfer between firms and universities creates synergy between them and develops the economy' (p.6). This refers to the 'Industrial PhD' model, a core pillar of the new national PhD system, and confirmed by staff in visit discussions as a key recruitment route for the programme in order to achieve critical mass. While there is no reference to a specific labour market analysis for this specialisation, the 'Analysis' refers to five external studies showing that the number of PhD graduates in business related subjects in Estonia is too low (pp. 6-7).

Visit discussions with senior managers in the University clarified that it was the task of Faculties, Schools and Institutes to articulate general University priorities into specific programmes rather than to be micro-managed from the centre.

3.1.1.2. Employers and other stakeholders of the study programme group are involved in the study programme's development.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. Formally, employers are involved in programme design and management at Tartu. The most recent SER for the Faculty refers to the University's Statutes of the Curriculum; 'All curricula are managed on a programme basis. The programme director is responsible for the organisation of studies and curriculum development. The programme director is guided by the programme council that includes the representatives of the structural unit, students and employers'

(SER, p.9). The SER Action Plan states that the Faculty will be 'Conducting regular discussions with all the stakeholders and working on new plans for development taking into account the challenges and requirements resulting from the structural reform of the university and thereby establishing the new interdisciplinary Faculty of Social Sciences, of which the School of Economics and Business Administration is also part of now' (SER p.18).

Visit discussions with external partners confirmed their engagement with SEBA staff in networks, exchanges, case studies and applied research which have fed into programme development. SEBA management and staff also outlined their own engagement with external partners, giving a picture of a positive, growing and outward facing School.

3.1.1.3. The study programme meets the requirements and trends in international legislation that regulate the professional field, and if an occupational qualification standard exists takes into consideration the acquisition and implementation of the knowledge and skills described therein.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. In Analysis, page 9 it is stated that the principles concerning recruitment and (and management) of teaching and research staff "are set up in the University of Tartu... regulations". It follows that the question to what extent the study program meets the requirements in terms of international legislation is a matter of the university's regulations. The interviews and report evidence indicates that that is the case. In June 2020 University of Tartu was rewarded the ACCEEU accreditation concerning entrepreneurial and engaged universities, which mirrors a capacity to follow and implement recent international university trends.

3.1.1.4. The learning outcomes of the study programme are equivalent and comparable to the learning outcomes of the academic cycles of higher education described in Annex 1 of the Standard of Higher Education.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. Table 1, 'Analysis of Learning Outcomes', matches national Standard of HE learning outcomes to programme learning outcomes. Furthermore, 'In 2020, the members of Universities Estonia signed a quality agreement on doctoral studies. The new agreement on the minimum requirements for doctoral theses maintains an internationally high academic level of doctoral theses, yet allows for the specifics of the discipline in the publication process to be taken into account and to better integrate applied and creative work into research. On 28 May 2021, the senate approved the Regulations for Doctoral Studies, which contain the updated requirements for the doctoral theses in line with the quality agreement', Annex 2, Development in Doctoral Studies, 2018-22, University of Tartu.

3.1.1.5. Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole. The title of the study programme is consistent with the content and the structure, and the content of the study programme supports the acquisition of the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is partially met. While the programme formally complies with the 240 ECTS requirements for PhD at the University (containing within it a taught (30 ECTS) element and independent study (210 ECTS) elements), there is ambiguity in the title, orientation and content of the programme that needs to be addressed.

Appendix 1, Faculty of Social Science Doctoral Program refers to the Broad field of Study for Business Administration as 'Business, administration and law', and the detailed field of study as Administration and Management. The 'Analysis' makes no reference to this template, instead differentiating Business Administration from Economics: 'Business Administration and Economics are different fields: while the former focuses mostly on managing firms' activities (for instance, entering foreign markets, managing human resource, etc), the latter focuses more on the activities of the public sector, and developing economic policies. These fields are based on relatively different theories and methods (although there are also some overlaps)' (Analysis, p.1).

These definitions and distinctions are both eccentric and simplistic, and without reference to the literature in the field. They are not a sound basis on which to construct a new programme. It is said that 'Overall, compared to the previous program (designated as 'Economics/Business Administration', SER, p.16), the new specialty of Business Administration will offer education that is more business-oriented and practical, more qualitative, and focused mainly on business administration and management'. This definition concerns Business Administration as managing private firms' activities. This is a rather normative approach to Business Administration as a research field which concerns the understanding of business processes based on well-established disciplines such as organizational studies, finance, strategic management, accounting, business law etc. These disciplines do indeed have important quantitative elements.

Despite these issues, it is important to recognise that the programme proposal is a response to trends in demand. In visit discussions with Business Administration students on the existing programme, the compulsory course in Micro-econometrics evinced a mixed response, so the decision to drop it from the suite of options for the new Business Administration specialisation will be welcomed by some (it will still be available as an 'external' option).

(See below 'Areas of concern and recommendations')

3.1.1.6. *The joint study programme and cooperation agreement thereof meet the requirements set in subsections 11 and 19 of the Higher Education Act.*

Evidence and analysis:

As it is not a joint study programme, this criterion was not assessed.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: STUDY PROGRAMME

As 5 criteria are fully met and one is partially met, 'Study Programme' conforms to the requirements in the sub-area overall.

Strengths

- The School is to be congratulated for responding to changes in demand among students away from 'Economics' and toward 'Business Administration'.
- The School is contributing to fulfilling national and University plans through this proposal.
- The School and the University have robust formal systems and compliance is high.
- The School is positive and outward facing, and engagement with external partners is strong.

Areas of concern and recommendations:

- There is indeed a case to be made that 'Economics' and 'Business Administration' are different fields, but most informed academic opinion would not accept the definitions of either Economics or Business Administration and the differentiation between them offered in the 'Analysis' document. The programme team needs to do further work to clarify scope and discipline definitions (partner University of Lund can provide a useful benchmark for these fundamentals).
- Within the 5 Specialty options (Analysis, p.3) offered for Business Admin, students must do 4 so there is a very limited choice. Therefore, the School must develop the option range in conjunction with other disciplines in the Faculty and international partners if possible, in order to ensure long-term programme viability.

Opportunities for further improvement

- The real benefit/s internally of introducing the specialisation could be more clearly articulated (e.g. financial, developing the research and academic community, preparing future teachers, reputational by helping to realise national strategic priorities).

3.1.2. Learning and teaching

3.1.2.1. *Conditions for admission and graduation are clear and transparent; requirements to prospective students stem from prerequisites for the completion of the study programme.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The Faculty Regulations for Doctoral Studies (Appendix 1) specify requirements for admission which are that 'Applicants for PhD study must hold a Master's degree or other equivalent qualification' (para.25). To assist applicants further 'In order to create better preconditions for developing teamwork and project-based research, SEBA has introduced clear principles for offering topics for PhD theses (adopted by the Council of the SEBA, 08.03.2017). The potential supervisor who is able to and interested in supervising doctoral theses submits the application with their proposed PhD thesis topic to the specific committee established by the head of the school. This proposal includes a short summary of the planned research work and publication of papers as well as information on how the proposed research is connected with research projects and/or research group activities and research funds. The topics selected by the committee are made available for applicants on the webpage of SEBA' (SER p.24). The University regulations specify the

prerequisites for completion and the process of assessment (Appendix 6). The exchange of information is facilitated by the Study Information System (SIS) database.

Evidence for the 2020 Student Survey showed that the SIS was viewed very positively (96% satisfaction). Visit discussions with students confirmed that conditions for admission and graduation were well-understood and that the system of posting defined offered topics was viewed very positively.

3.1.2.2. Academic staff members to be involved are aware of the objectives of the study programme and their role in achieving these objectives.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The Statutes of the Curriculum specify that staff are involved in the design, management and monitoring of the curriculum via the Programme Council. The Regulations for Doctoral Study place further obligations in terms of supervision, guidance, assessment and monitoring, on staff toward the achievement of the Doctoral award. Visit discussions with students expressed satisfaction with supervisor choice and with the option of having a second supervisor and indeed an external adviser. The University survey of PhD students (2020), shows high levels of satisfaction for the availability of supervisors and the quality of supervision in the Faculty of Social Sciences. In this context, the panel noted that all the students interviewed intended to pursue the 'integrated collection of articles' route to graduation which needs close collaboration with supervisors. This suggests high levels of trust and confidence by students in their supervisors, and a clear focus on achieving desired outcomes.

3.1.2.3. Planned study methods motivate learners to take charge of their studies and achieve learning outcomes.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. Course descriptors specify learning outcomes commensurate with course and programme level outcomes. The Faculty SER also states that 'According to the Study Regulations of the university, doctoral studies are pursued on the basis of an individual study plan of the doctoral student, which is put together with the student's supervisor for the entire period of study (SER, p.20)

In addition, the compulsory Research, Development and creative activities (RCD) module aims 'to complement and strengthen field-specific and speciality-specific research-based knowledge and skills. The doctoral student shall acquire the competence of conducting research, and transferable skills through independent research, development and creative work under the supervision of their supervisor(s), via practical experiences, participation in events and other activities' (Doctoral Programme of the Social Sciences webpage).

While there were many positive scores in the 2020 University survey of PhD students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, there were indifferent (below 6) scores for PhD progression, the usefulness of progress reviews (Additional information, figure 7), and for 13 out of 14 essential skillsets (Additional information, figure 12), among students in the Faculty of Social Sciences. The SER 2017 Action Plan was supposed to address similar issues arising from the 2017 University Survey of PhD students. In

visit discussions, School staff said that these figures represented legacy problems, and that the situation was improving because of the turnover in staff since 2020. Incoming (2021) students in the visit discussions reinforced this view.

3.1.2.4. Appropriate methods are planned for the assessment of learning outcomes; assessment is transparent, objective and supports the development of students.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. Course descriptors and University PhD regulations specify the assessment instruments for each element of the programme. PhD students' feedback on teaching and research is regularly collected and thoroughly analysed by the programme council and other stakeholders. Several surveys and open meetings (brain-storming) have been conducted for mapping problems and collecting ideas for the development of the programme and its curriculum, (SER, p.20). Under the Regulations for Doctoral Studies, one route allowed is via 'an integrated collection of research publications' (Reg 84). This is a popular choice with students.

Survey evidence provided and visit discussions with students confirmed a very positive picture as regards to assessment and assessment methods. It was suggested from the staff side that opponents be brought into the thesis defence process at an earlier stage (see 'Recommendations' below).

3.1.2.5. The content and volume of independent work and practical training (in the case of doctoral studies, implementation of professional activities) support the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. There is a balance of prescribed activities within the Doctoral programme designed to ensure that all the programme learning outcomes are achieved. Thus, the Faculty of Social Sciences Doctoral programme document specifies that 'The doctoral student shall: 1. Write a doctoral dissertation that complies with the requirements set in the Regulations for Doctoral Studies, following the progress review regulations set at their faculty. 2. Give at least one presentation at an international event of a high scientific standard, participate in international discussions regarding their research. 3. Actively participate in their speciality's doctoral seminars. 4. Participate in research and development activities at their institute or faculty, including contributing to conducting research and development activities and participate in events organised by the Doctoral Centre. 5. Be involved in outreach activities and pass on their knowledge through teaching or supervising. 6. Analyse their progress and professional development in collaboration with their supervisor(s), and report on the progress of their research and other academic activities during progress reviews' (para. 31).

Discussions with staff and external partners confirmed that students were overachieving in terms of international presentations; on the downside, the doctoral seminar programme had fallen into disuse (see 'Recommendations' below),

3.1.2.6. *The academic staff members to be involved have adequate teaching competences in order to support the autonomy of students and ensure adequate and professional supervision.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The 'Analysis' reiterates University policy for the recruitment of staff: 'Teaching and research staff are recruited by public recruitment procedure, by non-public recruitment procedure, or by invitation of a visiting teaching staff member to a position in the university. The principles of recruitment of teaching and research staff are set out in the University of Tartu Regulations for Recruitment of Academic Staff. The suitability of candidates for teaching and research positions in the university is assessed on the basis of the Job Descriptions of Academic Staff' (p.9). Para. 4 of the University's Job Descriptions document specifies the teaching competencies required for academic staff which include the student-centred and developmental competencies referred to in this criterion. According to the Regulation for Doctoral Studies, only staff in possession of a relevant PHD are allowed to supervise Doctoral candidates (although externals without a PhD can act as advisors).

3.1.2.7. *The level and volume of research, development and creative activities of academic staff to be involved is sufficient to provide instruction and supervise academic work by students in the appropriate cycle of higher education.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The CVs of staff, their qualifications, their Recent Publications and data in Tables 2 (PhD courses offered), 4 (quantum and level of publications) and 5 (funded research projects), provide evidence of the sufficiency of research and professional activity in the fields and subfields of Economics and Business supporting this programme. In discussions with SEBA management, further projects were outlined and the targets for income generation from them have been exceeded by Eur 1 million in the current period. So, in terms of opportunities for students, there is a good range of projects (Table 5) that future PhD students can be involved in as Research Assistants/Junior Research Fellows. There is demonstrable engagement between the institution, academics/researchers and firms and civil organisation. (sTARTUp Lab, consultations with firms, public seminars etc), and the industrial PhD route offers huge potential. This was confirmed in visit discussions with external partners and SEBA staff.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: LEARNING AND TEACHING

All criteria are fully met, 'Learning and teaching' conforms to requirements of the sub-area.

Strengths

- The School and University regulatory framework is strong and transparent, and clearly understood by students.
- The system of offering defined topics to potential PhD students is viewed positively by students.
- Students are out-performing requirements in terms of the level of engagement in international presentation mobilities.
- Students have very good opportunities for participating in funded research projects.

Opportunities for further improvement

- While panel accepts the legacy data argument made by staff concerning student skills development, close attention should be paid to this area with a view to raising scores by the time of the next survey.
- The programme of Doctoral seminars should be re-instated as soon as circumstances allow.
- The bar for international presentations should be raised from 1 to 3 to reflect the excellent performance already being achieved.
- The idea of engaging opponents at an earlier stage in the thesis defence process is a good one and should be taken forward.
- An organogram of the programme management system and an explanation of the selection mechanism of these members, the number of members, their expected qualifications/competences would be helpful additions to transparency.
- On staff quality rankings, Table A demonstrates SEBA staff standings in relation to social sciences and management within Estonia, but it is not a ranking of Business as a discipline. A more analytical take on the subject expertise to deliver business administration PhDs would be helpful.

3.1.3. Organisation of studies

3.1.3.1. *The organisation of studies is unambiguously regulated and information thereof publicly available; it allows to cater for the needs of different learners as well as specificities of the study programme group.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The organisation of studies is unambiguously regulated and information publicly available. In practice, relevant information is split between the detailed specification of the Faculty of Social Sciences Doctoral Programme, the Regulations for Doctoral Studies and Study Regulations.

The institution informed the panel that they had experienced challenges until recently as there were many legal acts held separately across the institution which effected different aspects of doctoral education. Worked commenced in Spring 2021 to consolidate these and that task has recently been completed. The panel found the Regulations for Doctoral Studies were detailed and comprehensive, covering, among other stipulations, outline supervision arrangements, personal plans and progress reviews, assessment of research, ex-matriculation and thesis requirements. The University also advised the panel that they intend to progress this work by developing a specialist website for PhD students making the information more interactive, service design experts are currently working on this project.

The Doctoral Programme specification outlines the field of study, language of instruction, required credits, programme objectives and learning outcomes. The programme consists of two modules which include a research, development and creative work module (210ECTS) and a study module (30ECTS). Within these modules, students are required to take a range of courses, including research methodology, research methods and electives including Topics in Innovation, Internationalisation of Firms and Strategic Management.

The needs of different learners are also addressed in the regulations, including the Study Regulations, which outline arrangements for part-time students, counselling and other forms of support. Students reported to the team that they find information about their programme to be accessible and accurate.

3.1.3.2. *Practical training (in doctoral studies applied professional activities) is regulated, requirements for the completion of practical training have been laid down and preliminary agreements concluded with organisations offering opportunities for practical training.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. Students confirmed to the team that they are provided with a wide range of opportunities to engage in applied professional activities, for example one student is involved in the Estonian Leadership Survey, supported by the Chair of Management. This is a collaboration with a government agency to research Estonian leadership trends. The student was involved in conducting focus groups, analysing data and contributing to the writing of the final report. Another student was involved in a collaboration with the same agency but in a project concerning the Covid experiences

of different companies and entrepreneurs. A third example was provided of an international project where a student is exploring co-working spaces in rural areas, with a European research network; the student can choose to join one of a number of working groups depending on their specific interests. Students considered these were excellent opportunities to develop their professional networks and learn from more experienced colleagues. The panel found that the range of accessible applied professional activities available for students to engage in is a **strength of the programme**.

3.1.3.3. The higher education institution has in place rules for academic recognition as well as for recognizing prior studies and work experience.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The institution has detailed Admission Rules in Doctoral Studies. An applicant must have obtained a master's degree or an equivalent qualification on the basis of a nationally recognised curriculum and meet the admissions requirements of the programme. International students have to certify English language proficiency at B2 level and the institution makes use of NARIC to determine the comparability of qualifications. Entrance requirements can include specified average grades at Master's level and an entrance examination.

Specific Admission Requirements to the various PhD programmes of the University are listed in Annex 1 of the Admission Rules in Doctoral Programmes. These was last revised in 2017, hence the entry requirements are not specified. The team considered it an **opportunity for further improvement** to include Business Administration entry requirements to the Rules.

The institution also has rules in place for recognising prior studies and work experience, which the institution considered they could use more widely. The SER (p.6) states that 'courses taken outside the University of Tartu (UT) (e.g. during international mobility) can be used to fulfil the curriculum using the recognition of prior learning principles (the procedure of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL, VÕTA in Estonian), provided that the workload and contents meet the requirements. The RPL procedure can also be used to transfer credit points for previous professional experience', but this is not outlined in the Admission Rules in Doctoral Studies. The team agreed that including this provision in the Admission Rules in Doctoral Studies constitutes an **opportunity for further improvement**.

3.1.3.4. Students have access to counselling (study and career counselling and preferably psychological counselling); measures for monitoring and supporting academic progress of students have been devised.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The University has a dedicated Counselling Centre, operating within the Office of Academic Affairs, that offers students advice regarding organisation of studies, career and psychological counselling, study-related information and support for students with special needs. The Centre also organises various seminars for students on subjects including how to set effective boundaries, motivation, cultural diversity and overcoming anxiety ([Seminars of Counselling Centre | University of Tartu \(ut.ee\)](#)). Further sessions include public speaking, time management and preparing for studies abroad. The Counselling Centre has 14 staff covering a wide range of support

areas, including study advice, pedagogical support, careers advice, special needs advisers and psychologists. During the pandemic the Centre's services have been operated online and, in 2020, a booking system was introduced that allows students to make appointments with the career counsellor, psychologist or special needs adviser, making support more accessible. In 2021, the panel found that data for PhD students (all programmes) showed 167 appointments had been made for counselling services. Internal quality assurance survey data found that 98% of students using the service found the support they required.

3.1.3.5. *The higher education institution has devised a plan for fostering international mobility among students enrolled in the study programme group.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The institution has arrangements in place to support international mobility among its students. These include funding and support from the Doctoral School in Economics and Innovation. Available funding includes short-term mobility grants, the School also organises summer schools, courses, guest lectures and writing retreats. In addition to this, students can access mobility funding from mobility scholarships, doctoral student mobility grants, Erasmus+. They can also secure funding through Dora Pluss, whose objectives include improving the awareness of young researchers and lecturers about different teaching and research practices and their participation in international cooperation projects. Students must complete at least one course (minimum 3 ECTS) at another institution in Estonia or abroad, with the intention that it will enhance their theoretical knowledge.

Students informed the panel about the broad range of international mobility opportunities available to them. Examples provided included participation at a leadership workshop in Germany and a conference organised by the international Military Testing Association. Further examples included a first-year student who intended to take a mobility period of between one month and one semester at a French institution to write a paper with a co-author and another student who accessed Dora Pluss funding to engage in international conferences in Tirana and Turku.

The institution also provided the panel with a breakdown of mobility grants issued to PhD students between 2016-21; 22% of which were for mobility itself, 19% for administration and a further 19% were issued for writing retreats. Smaller proportions were funded for conferences (15%), summer schools (14%) and training (9%).

3.1.3.6. *The higher education institution implements fair and transparent rules for dealing with complaints.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The University has fair and transparent rules for dealing with complaints. The institution sets out its policy for contesting decisions concerning the organisation of studies in the Study Regulation. Students can raise concerns about any aspect of their experience through this procedure, with the exception of appeals against assessment decisions and tuition fee complaints. The student must first contact the person who made the decision, within 5 days of it being communicated. This individual has the right to uphold or dismiss the complaint within three working days. If the complaint is dismissed, then the student can submit an appeal to the Vice Dean for

Academic Affairs within 3 working days. The Vice Dean may convene a review panel but must reach a decision within 14 days of submission of the appeal. Where the Vice Dean is involved or fails to follow the correct procedure the student can raise their concern to the Appeal Committee, the composition of whom is confirmed by Senate.

Where a student wishes to challenge an assessment decision, they must write to the Vice Dean Academic Affairs. The Vice Dean will then convene a committee (not to be confused with the Appeals Committee) to review the appeal. Again, the student can challenge the initial decision on their challenge by referring the outcome to the Appeal Committee.

In addition to these complaint and appeal processes, doctoral students may also challenge the decision of a review committee by appealing to the Vice Dean for Research within 7 days announcement of the committee's decision. The Vice Dean will assemble a new committee with a revised composition to review the initial decision. If the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they can appeal to the Appeal Committee within 30 days.

In addition to these detailed and comprehensive processes students informed the team that they knew how to raise any concerns and were satisfied with the information available. The team did find that nomenclature could be improved in relation to the various committees involved at appeal and review stages. The team also found that the use of different timeframes (3, 5, 7 and 30 days) at various stages added a potentially unnecessary degree of complexity, possibility making it harder for students to understand, and would benefit from being rationalised. Reviewing nomenclature and timeframes relating to complaints and appeals was therefore considered an **opportunity for further improvement**.

3.1.3.7. Plans are in place for regular internal assessment of study programmes by the higher education institution, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, academic staff).

Evidence and analysis:

The institution has an established and regular system and cycle for internal quality assessment (IQA) of their study programmes. IQA is carried out at the beginning of each academic year and completed by 31st October. It considers the previous three academic years and reflects on the following aspects of the programme: content and structure, learning environment and resources, academic staff, learning process, students and support services and is completed in accordance with guidelines produced by the Office of Academic Affairs. Records of IQA are maintained within the Student Information System (SIS). The Programme Director coordinates the process, drafts the initial analysis and forms preliminary conclusions. A wide range of stakeholder feedback is taken into account including from students, graduates, academic staff and employers. The draft analysis is discussed by the Programme Committee. The panel found evidence of the institution responding positively to findings from previous evaluations. Changes implemented as a result include to attestation, the process for determining thesis topics and involving younger staff in supervision.

Students informed the panel that they complete evaluation forms, which feed in to IQA, through the information system. However, students also told the panel that the feedback loop was rarely closed by the institution and that more could be done to inform them about how the institution responded to their comments. Staff acknowledged to the team/panel that this was a reasonable observation

from students and something that the programme could improve. The team concluded that it was an **opportunity for further improvement** to introduce mechanisms for 'closing the feedback' loop to students after they submit evaluation forms

The team/panel also discussed survey outcomes that lagged behind other Schools in the institution. Specifically, how the institution ensures that suitable actions are addressed to improve performance. The institution informed the panel that there are a number of central mechanisms in place to achieve this including progress reviews and financial incentives intended to drive quality and efficiency. However, the institution also considers there are limitations to how effectively this can be achieved centrally. This has formed part of the reason for establishing Doctoral Schools, which will enable programme leaders to justify decisions to their peers as well as share good practice.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: ORGANISATION OF STUDIES

All criteria are fully met, 'Organisation of Studies' conforms to requirements of the sub-area

Strengths

- The range of accessible opportunities for students to engage in applied professional activities.
- Effective plans and support to enable international mobility among students.
- The University has strong, comprehensive, clear, fair and transparent systems and procedures governing the organisation of studies.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Clear entry requirements for all specialisations of the programme should be stated.
- Incorporate University policy on recognition of prior accredited and experiential learning in the Admission Rules for Doctoral Studies.
- Review nomenclature and timeframes relating to complaints and appeals.
- Introduce mechanisms for 'closing the feedback' loop to students after they submit evaluation forms.

CONCLUSIONS AND AGGREGATED ASSESSMENT: QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

While we have made suggestions for improvement in all sub-areas (see above), the area of Quality of Instruction conforms to requirements with only one partially met criterion overall. Although those concerns should be addressed by the School team, we do not consider it makes a material difference to the judgment.

Strengths

- The School is to be congratulated for responding to changes in demand among students away from 'Economics' and toward 'Business Administration'.
- The School is contributing to fulfilling national and University plans through this proposal.
- The School is positive and outward facing, and engagement with external partners is strong.
- The system of offering defined topics to potential PhD students is viewed positively by students.
- Students are out-performing requirements in terms of the level of engagement in international presentation mobilities.
- Students have very good opportunities for participating in funded research projects.
- The broad range of accessible opportunities for students to engage in applied professional activities.
- Effective plans and support to enable international mobility among students.
- The University has strong, comprehensive, clear, fair and transparent systems and procedures governing the organisation of studies.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- There is indeed a case to be made that 'Economics' and 'Business Administration' are different fields, but most informed academic opinion would not accept the definitions of either Economics or Business Administration and the differentiation between them offered in the 'Analysis' document. The programme team needs to do further work to clarify scope and discipline definitions (partner University of Lund can provide a useful benchmark for these fundamentals).
- Within the 5 Specialty options (Analysis, p.3) offered for Business Administration, students must do 4 so there is a very limited choice. Therefore, the School must develop the option range in conjunction with other disciplines in the Faculty and international partners if possible, in order to ensure long-term programme viability.

Opportunities for further improvement

- The real benefit/s internally of introducing the specialisation could be more clearly articulated (e.g. financial, developing the research and academic community, preparing future teachers, reputational by helping to realise national strategic priorities).

- While panel accepts the legacy data argument made by staff concerning student skills development, close attention should be paid to this area with a view to raising scores by the time of the next survey.
- The bar for international presentations should be raised from 1 to 3 to reflect the excellent performance already being achieved once circumstances allow.
- The idea of engaging opponents at an earlier stage in the thesis defence process is a good one and should be taken forward.
- An organogram of the programme management system and an explanation of the selection mechanism of these members, the number of members, their expected qualifications/competences would be helpful additions to transparency.
- As opposed to general SEBA rankings, a more analytical take on the subject expertise to deliver business administration PhDs would be helpful.
- Clear entry requirements for all specialisations of the programme should be stated.
- Incorporate University policy on recognition of prior accredited and experiential learning in the Admission Rules for Doctoral Studies.
- Review nomenclature and timeframes relating to complaints and appeals.
- Introduce mechanisms for 'closing the feedback' loop to students after they submit evaluation forms.

3.2. RESOURCES

3.2.1. Academic staff

3.2.1.1. Requirements for academic staff are based on the Higher Education Standard and further rules put in place by the higher education institution, procedures for the selection and recruitment of staff are fair and transparent.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. According to the HE Act Chapter 5 concerning Academic Staff “The employer establish the grades of academic positions, the conditions of and procedure for filling the positions,”. The principles of recruitment of teaching and research staff are set out in the University of Tartu Regulations for Recruitment of Academic Staff. The suitability of candidates for teaching and research positions in the university is assessed on the basis of the Job Descriptions of Academic Staff’ (p.9). Para. 4 of the University’s Job Descriptions document specifies the teaching competencies required for academic staff.

It is stated in the Analysis page 10 that principles of recruitment of teaching and research of staff are set in the UT Regulations for Recruitment of Academic Staff. The regulations are written in accordance with international recruitment standards. Academic freedom and autonomy of the university is emphasized in UT Strategic Plan 2021-2025 as a core value for University of Tartu (UT). A fundamental pillar for this particular core value is the transparency in the procedures for selection of academic staff and this is fulfilled through the UT Regulations.

3.2.1.2. The qualifications of prospective academic staff members meet the requirements laid down in legislation as well as those stemming from the specificities of the study programme group and academic cycle.

Evidence and analysis:

The qualification of prospective academic staff members meets the requirements, as the course profiles mirror academic staff competences. Evidence contained in the ‘Analysis’ and ‘Additional Information’ from SEBA show the extent and types of staff personal development historically and Tables 4 and 5 show research and publication activity, all of which is very positive. It is important that the qualification of the staff members is being monitored over time. A point of some concern is the opportunity for development and re-education of the academic staff, which is critical to the long-term sustainability of the programme (see below, 3.2.1.5).

3.2.1.3. The number of academic staff to be involved in the study programme group is adequate and enables achieving the objectives of the study programmes as well as the learning outcomes.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. Table two SEBA documents indicates that at least 25 academic staff members will be part of the research, supervision and/or teaching portfolio. This seems to be an adequate number for 30 students currently studying in this field (page 4 in the Analysis).

3.2.1.4. Prospective academic staff members regularly engage in continuing education at institutions of higher education or research from abroad, take part in international research projects and deliver presentations at high level conferences.

Evidence and analysis:

The academic staff has a relatively strong international research profile with an increasing number of citations of SEBA staff members (from an average of 58,3 in 2016 to 206,4 in 2020 (Analysis p. 2)). The panel acknowledges SEBA's desire to further develop the internationalisation of research and the curriculum. We recommend a stronger focus on recruitment of international faculty in order to ensure the international level of the research and the courses. One possible model which was mentioned during the interviews, is a short term "visiting scholar" programme in order to attractive faculty from abroad.

3.2.1.5. The higher education institution has plans for creating opportunities for continuing education and personal development for academic staff members involved in the study programme group, including for benefitting from international mobility opportunities

Evidence and analysis:

There are data to support the historic profile of staff activities including personal development and international mobility (in the SER, the Analysis (narrative) and Additional Information (Table 3)). These show a good picture in the aggregate. We can extrapolate what some of these activities might be for those staff holding research grants stretching into the future. There are also ambitious targets for income generation which imply certain staff activities going forward. It is mentioned in the Strategic Plan that University of Tartu aims to be an international university based on cooperation with strategic partners including support of learning mobility and international staff development.

In general terms then, the University has certain aspirations for its staff. However, it is difficult to see substantial or concrete evidence for the fulfilment of this criterion in specific terms in the absence of a School or Faculty staff development plan or plans.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: ACADEMIC STAFF

As 4 criteria are met and one is partially met, 'Academic staff' conforms to requirements of the sub-area overall.

Strengths

- The data show a strong academic profile with appropriate qualifications in the relevant disciplines with a good aggregate level of research, mobility and publication activity.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- Faculty and School staff development plans specifying group and individual objectives for teaching, research and CPD with KPIs, need to be put in place.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Raising the international profile of SEBA faculty through the development of homegrown talent and the appointment of international staff

3.2.2. Learning and teaching environment

3.2.2.1. There are facilities (lecture rooms, labs, seminar rooms, rooms for independent work by students etc.) available for studies and study-related research, development and creative activities; these are adequately furnished and equipped with up-to-date equipment needed for achieving the objectives of the study programmes; or alternatively concrete financing decisions/projects exist in order to meet the extended needs.

Evidence and analysis:

The criterion is met. The Statutes of the Curriculum adopted by Senate state that a precondition of opening a curriculum are that sufficient academic and material resources of the university are available. The School of Economics and Business Administration informed the panel that they consider they have sufficient premises including computer labs, lectures rooms and library resources. These are situated in the new Delta Building. Completed in 2019, at a cost of 30million Euros, PhD students also have their own office space (up to 15 places). The building itself is shared with a range of other academic departments. Due to the recent infrastructure investment, the institution informed the team/panel that no further investment was planned. The panel found that students were very positive about the new building and shared workspaces. Those students travelling to campus periodically also had the space they required. This is supported by 2021 internal survey data, which found that 97.5% of SEBA staff and students were satisfied with the room that they work in and their physical environment.

3.2.2.2. The making available of up-to-date textbooks; research publications and other study materials as well as providing access to research databases necessary for conducting studies, research, development and creative activities in the study programme group is ensured.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. The panel determined that students have access to a broad and appropriate range of relevant databases and statistical and research software. The Delta Building contains a specialised library equipped with modern technology and student workstations and all SEBA's employees and students can also visit the University of Tartu Library and the libraries of other faculties and institutes, if necessary.

Staff and students have access to an extensive range of databases including Scopus, EBSCO, JSTOR, Emerald, Wiley, Taylor and Francis and Sage among others. The institution informed the panel that investments are planned in order to procure international databases (e.g. Orbis Europe for 17.500 Euros) are also foreseen. Students can also make use of a range of databases that are especially useful for business, management and economics, including the Amadeus database containing selected data from European firms' annual reports and the Estonian Business Registry's database containing all Estonian firms' annual reports. Moreover, they have access to Estonian firms' market-product and market-service level export data and payroll tax data and CV Keskus' (Estonia's largest online job-search portal) database of job-seekers' CVs. Students confirmed to the team that they are satisfied with the resources available to them, including for students who access them remotely where it was felt the process was intuitive. This is supported by a 2021 SEBA survey which found that, as with physical space, 97.5% of staff and students considered they had the materials they required to do their work.

3.2.2.3. *State of the art and fit for purpose information and communication technological solutions, including study information system, document management system, online learning environment, have been envisioned in order to support learning and teaching.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. Technology investments have been made at a level of 40,000 Euros per annum but have grown due to the expansion of digital education needs to approximately 80,000 Euros in 2021. The institution informed the team that these investments are expected to remain on a similar level in the following years. In previous years, SEBA has invested into the Neuromarketing Lab with eye and emotion-tracking equipment more than 100,000 Euros, in total. Students are also provided with access to a wide range of software including Office 365 for personal devices, Stata, SPSS, Nvivo and ATLAS.ti. IT support is available between 8am and 6pm and supplemented with a range of online guides and advice. Student confirmed to the panel that they could access all the software they required, and the process was efficient for making any requests for additional resources. Again, data from internal satisfaction surveys found 96% of students agreed that information systems and digital environments supported their studies.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

All criteria are met, 'Learning and Teaching environment' conforms to the requirements of the sub-area.

Strengths

- The high quality and extensive physical and learning resources available for students

3.2.3. Financial resources

3.2.3.1. *The educational institution has adequate funds necessary for conducting high quality studies in the study programme group as well as for the provision of adequate and up-to-date support services and supporting the development of academic staff.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is met. Doctoral studies in general are funded from the state's activity support (state stipends for the doctoral students as well as funds for teaching them) and the base line funding (state funding for conducting research at the universities). SEBA funding is based on different components: project income from EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), international funding, national funding, life-long learning, private funding, PhD awards, national activity support, personal research grants, research baseline funding, R&D projects and R&D services, Figure 1 Analysis document.

The largest part of income comes from national activity support, that is also most stable source of funding. Personal research grants, R&D services and ESIF are also of high importance, while latter has increased significantly and was not present at all in 2016. SEBA has mentioned that ESIF funding is related with need to recruit new junior researchers that fits with plans to additional study group speciality in Business Administration.

According to SEBA Analysis there is low level of additional investments needed in upcoming years as SEBA has new campus, computer inventory etc.

We note SEBA's ability to attract and conduct research projects. Since 2016 to date, SEBA has reported of 34 different research projects in total amount of more than 5 mln EUR, 9 of them are still ongoing. The relatively high ability to raise project funding builds a good foundation to develop the PhD study program. In addition to numerous research projects presented in Table 5, SEBA Business staff has gained two more research projects started in 2022, 1) Tiia Vissak: Export(ers') Performance in VUCA and Non-VUCA Environments, 2022-2026 (5 years), annual budget: 168 750 EUR and 2) Krista Jaakson: Ethical Organisational Culture: Multi-level Analysis of its Determinants, Practices and Consequences, 2022-2025 (4 years), annual budget: 138 125 EUR.

Based on income and cost analysis SEBA has calculated that the cost of one PhD student is 14605 EUR for study period while income is forecasted on level of 16500, indicating that SEBA has sufficient incomes to cover planned additional 6-8 PhD students per year.

3.2.3.2. *The higher education institution has a strategy for raising funds needed for the advancement of the study programme group related research and development.*

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is not fully met. SEBA activities are based on University of Tartu Strategic Plan 2021-2025, Statute of the Curriculum approved by the Senate of Tartu University, cost benefit analysis carried out by The Department of Finance of the University of Tartu.

According to SEBA document Analysis for opening a speciality in a new study program group, PhD students have three different statuses and financing from September 2022 (p. 13):

- 1) state budget support for those doctoral students who enter the program on the positions financed by the state budget as junior researchers;
- 2) industrial doctoral students' positions supported by companies and other non-university institutions
- 3) tuition fees from the students, who have chosen this model for entering doctoral studies.

Additional funding is planned from the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia, who grants the base funding for financing of R&D institutions for the purpose of attaining their strategic development objectives, including co-financing national and foreign projects and opening up new research directions and investing in the infrastructure.

There are clear rules for base funding (p.13). /There are three criteria of base funding: • the number of high-level publications in internationally recognized journals and high-level level scientific monographs and their chapters filed on behalf of R&D institutions (40% of total funding); • the amount of funding allocated for R&D (grants and contracts directly related to R&D activities; income from licensing and patents) (50%); • the institutions' participation in PhD studies (10%)./

The analysis does not give full overview of SEBA budget for different PhD programs. The strategic plans for Business Administration and Economics specialities are not fully understandable and contain ambiguity. Neither the SER nor the 'Analysis' cover strategy for the further development of the study programme or cost-benefit analysis covering annual cost of each PhD students. A general budget and further development plans of SEBA's PhD programmes needs to be added (see Recommendations below)

3.2.3.3. Financial reports for the higher education institution or keeper thereof are publicly available. Annual reports for the higher education institution or keeper thereof have undergone financial auditing unless stipulated otherwise in legislation.

Evidence and analysis:

The requirement is met. University of Tartu annual reports are published on UT webpage, <https://ut.ee/et/sisu/aastaaruanded>, latest available annual report for year 2020. The annual report is audited by BDO Eesti, auditing follows Estonian legislation. According to annual report 2020, economic results was positive 3,4 mln euros, University of Tartu is a public non-profit organisation. The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration is a part of Tartu University budget and does not have independent financial reporting.

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

2 criteria are met and one partially met. Given the strength of funding streams and income generation successes, 'Financial Resources' conforms to requirements of the sub-area overall.

Strengths

- Diversified structure of financing, stable state national activity support funding.
- Growing funding from R&D services, research grants and ESIF financing, strong engagement with external partners.
- New national PhD legislation guarantees junior researcher position and salary for state funded PhD students.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The analysis does not cover strategy for further development of the study programme and cost-benefit analysis covering annual cost of each PhD students, general budget and further development plans of SEBA's PhD programs need to be added.
- In particular, there should be a full evaluation of the opportunities for Industrial PhD numbers including the development of KPIs to monitor progress.

Opportunities for further improvement

- The new study programme speciality Business Administration may improve cooperation between the business sector and the university and could help to initiate new research areas and attract business related research grants.
- A focus on raising the number of students through the Industrial PhD route.

CONCLUSIONS AND AGGREGATED ASSESSMENT: RESOURCES

While there are a couple of criteria which are only partially fulfilled in the sub-areas, these were not of sufficient gravity to qualify a 'conforms to requirement' judgment. The picture on resources is very positive overall. Thus, based on the overall assessments of the 3 sub areas, the area of 'Resources' conforms to requirements.

Strengths

- The academic staff has a relatively strong international research profile with an increasing number of citations of SEBA staff members.
- The qualification of prospective academic staff members meets the requirements, as the course profiles mirror academic staff competences.
- Physical resources and IT infrastructure are excellent state-of-the-art facilities situated in the new Delta Building.
- Staff and students have access to an extensive range of databases including Scopus, EBSCO, JSTOR, Emerald, Wiley, Taylor and Francis and Sage among others.
- Students are also provided with access to a wide range of software including Office 365 for personal devices, Stata, SPSS, Nvivo and ATLAS.ti.
- Diversified funding components including project income from EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), international funding, national funding, life-long learning, private funding, PhD awards, national activity support, personal research grants, research baseline funding, R&D projects and R&D services.
- New national PhD legislation guarantees junior researcher position and salary for state funded PhD students.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- Faculty and School staff development plans specifying group and individual objectives with KPIs should be put in place.
- The analysis does not cover strategy for further development of the study programme. Cost-benefit analysis covering annual cost of each PhD students, general budget and further development plans of SEBA's PhD programmes need to be added.

3.3. SUSTAINABILITY

3.3.1. Further sustainability criteria

3.3.1.1. The higher education institution has a development plan along with an action plan aimed at ensuring the sustainability of high-quality studies in the higher education institution as a whole as well as in the study programme group under assessment. In the case of a brand new higher education institution, a development plan and draft action plan exist.

Evidence and analysis:

The University has a comprehensive Development Plan including Action Plans for each of the 10 areas identified as core to its mission (University Strategic Plan 2021-25).

The SEBA 'Analysis' outlines the new arrangements for PhD study in Estonia as from September 2022, in which there will be 3 routes of entry for students. These are as either a university funded junior researcher, an employee of an external organisation (an NGO, a private company or government agency), or a privately funded student (Analysis, p.15). Based on the 2018 'Vision for Doctoral studies 2020' from the Vice Rector for Research, 'Annex 2, Development Plan of Doctoral Studies, 2018-22' describes the plan of implementation: 'Starting from autumn 2022, the organisation of doctoral studies, incl. the structure and management of curricula, differs from the first and second level of higher education. The UT amended the Statutes of Curriculum in spring 2021 to open new doctoral programmes in the 2022/2023 academic year. The faculties have merged the 34 existing doctoral curricula into eight doctoral programmes and updated the list of specialisations. Doctoral studies will be managed by the faculty. This creates the first level of quality assurance under the responsibility of the vice dean for research (the second level of quality assurance is under the responsibility of the vice rector for research), and, at the same time, allows for the specifics of faculties to be taken into account in the organisation of studies. The specialisations included in a programme ensure academic diversity and are at the heart of the doctoral student's research.

3.3.1.2. When planning studies in the study programme group, the higher education institution has conducted a risk analysis and devised a long-term financial projection, which among other things includes the calculation of a student place, an analysis of risks stemming from the operating environment and planned mitigating measures thereof.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is partially fulfilled. There is a model for distributing PhD places: 'The Rector's Office uses a performance-based model to distribute the student places funded from the higher education activity support between faculties. It is based on indicators taken into account in allocating the activity support and R&D baseline financing to the UT (the number of doctoral graduates, graduation rate). A list of performance indicators based on the objectives of the UT has been drawn up for distributing student places between institutes. Since 2021, a dashboard can be used to select, combine and compare the indicators in the faculty in line with the faculty's objective, incl. by

assigning a weight to the different indicators based on the faculty's objective' (Annex 2, Development of Doctoral Studies 2018-22, p.2).

SEBA has provided the calculation of PhD student place cost and income analysis, (page 12-13 in the Analysis). According to the HEI, PhD student place costs for 2020 were 14605 EUR annually, of which 7814 are costs of HEI. Income of HEI for PhD program is reported from different sources, state base funding is expected to be 5500, remaining costs are expected to be covered by different sources.

Long term financial projection for the PhD study programme is not currently available. The danger that by splitting the existing programme in two specialities could simply halve the intake to each new specialisation was acknowledged in visit discussions. There was an expectation that the Industrial PhD model would supply more students to make the programme viable (see Recommendations below).

Although there is no formal risk analysis, SEBA has presented a brief risk assessment for the PhD programme, Table 5 in additional information provided. Main identified risks are 1) Financial: the study program group will not cover costs. The expected impact is estimated to be low. The financing scheme from state budget is now fully confirmed yet, SEBA plans to cover excess costs themselves. 2) Key staff leaving, again impact is estimated to be low as there is sufficient young staff available who would presumably be interested to fulfil available places. 3) Low level of good PhD student candidates is also estimated to be low risk as the interest in PhD student places has increased, 4) some students could quit studies is estimated as medium risk with relatively high probability, 5) external risks are estimated also to be low as government is working on new PhD legislation that is expected to improve the financing.

3.3.1.3. The age structure of academic staff to be involved as well as share of young teachers ensures sustainability of instruction provision in the study programme group.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is fulfilled. The profile of academic staff is sustainable, with a tranche of younger staff being introduced to the programme and evidence of reflection of the distribution of ages throughout the teaching team. According to evidence from SEBA Table 2, the age structure of the Business Administration teaching team is relatively well-balanced and is supporting sustainability. Average age the teaching staff is 49 years, while average age of 6 professors listed in Table 2 is 55 years. There are 8.6 full time associate professors (average age 47), one junior lecturer with 0.5 working load, three lecturers and one professor emeritus in the field of Business. The new national PhD legislation will ensure junior research fellow positions for state financed PhD student places, that supports sustainability of teaching and research staff.

3.3.1.4. In the case of doctoral studies, sustainability is achieved when doctoral studies in the study programme group are based on well established fields of research and development within the higher education institution that have successfully undergone evaluation. Supervisors of doctoral theses are actively engaged in research and have supervised successfully defended doctoral theses.

Evidence and analysis:

This criterion is fulfilled. Supervisors of doctoral students in the field of Business are actively engaged in research. Data about publications provided in Table 3 shows that staff members of Business field have actively published since 2016 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 category publications (total number 216), with 1.1 category dominating by nearly 70% of publications (151 publications).

The number of defended doctoral theses is yet relatively low. According to data provided on Figure D, in 2019 and 2020 total number of PhD graduates was 4 for total faculty including Economics speciality. According to Table 3, there have been 13 PhD graduates since 2016 in the field of Business and there 30 existing PhD students, that create relatively solid base for starting the new Business speciality PhD programme. It is positive to note that the average time for graduation is decreased from 9 to 5 years in 2020. The University is planning admission of 6-8 new doctoral students into business speciality, the number of graduates is therefore also expected to grow as after introduction of new state financed junior researcher program, institutional PhD and new industrial PhDs are starting to increase graduation numbers. We believe the process takes time before taking effect, and the number of graduates is still a concern, but the starting point for creating a specialty is favourable.

CONCLUSIONS AND AGGREGATED ASSESSMENT: SUSTAINABILITY

The assessment area of 'Sustainability' partially conforms to requirements despite 3 of the 4 criteria being fully met, and one partially met. The area needing attention is financial planning, without which it is difficult to assess the long-term sustainability of the proposal.

Strengths

- The University has a clear long-term strategic plan in place.
- Staffing metrics are very positive for sustaining research, supervision and teaching and learning in Business Administration
- Physical and IT infrastructures are fully up to date and state-of-the-art, so no need for major investment within the current planning horizon.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- Long-term financial projections of the study programme are currently not covered by the analysis. We suggest that SEBA needs a clear view and aims for further development of the study programme. 3-5 years forward-looking plans and key risk indicators (KRI) should be created and followed to have clear view on the success and problem areas of the programme.
- Our concern is that the current level of graduates, about 4 PhD graduates per year is clearly insufficient for having two separate PhD study programme specialisations in SEBA. The School has a goal to increase admissions so that Business specialty PhD students' admissions would be 6-8 per year which would increase also the current relatively low level of graduates in long-run.
- To achieve that goal, SEBA needs clear action plans for continuing to improve attractiveness of the programme for both students and staff members, financing resources, publications and study programme quality.

- In particular, there should be a full evaluation of the opportunities for Industrial PhD numbers including the development of KPIs to monitor progress.
- While the programme team needs to do further work to develop the option range, it should do this in conjunction with other disciplines in the Faculty in order to ensure long-term programme viability.

Opportunities for further improvement

- It is stated that 'From 2022, support services are provided by centres for doctoral studies, which are work organisation units of the dean's offices. Cooperation between specialisations is coordinated by the faculty's doctoral studies council comprising representatives of all specialisations of the faculty's doctoral programme(s), the vice dean for research, members appointed by the vice dean for research, and the faculty's student representatives (1/5 of the council)' (Annex 2, p1). A formal system of monitoring including KPIs should be put in place from the outset.
- We would like to see more evidence and discussion of the future development of the programme, what are the risks and what is the critical number of students for both specialities, so that the SEBA PhD study programme specialities are sustainable.
- A thorough risk analysis and/or SWOT is recommended to be worked out, that should reveal problem areas and create discussion of sustainability and actions for PhD programme development.