

Quality Assurance System in HE in Estonia

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26.11.2015



EESTI KÕRG- JA KUTSEHARIDUSE
KVALITEEDIAGENTUUR



- **EKKA's mission, status, structure**
- **Some background information about HE**
- **QA system in HE**



**EKKA's mission is,
in cooperation with its partners,
to promote quality in the field of education
and thereby increase the competitiveness
of the Estonian society.**

The general framework



- **The status, tasks and financing** of EKKA have been regulated by the Universities Act, the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, the Private Schools Act and the Republic of Estonia Standard of Higher Education
- In its activities, EKKA is guided by the principles of the **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)**
- EKKA's basic principles of external evaluation are described in the EKKA Quality Manual



- **§ 10 of the Universities Act:**

(2) The Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency is comprised of an **office** organising assessment and an **assessment council** conducting assessment

(5) The minister responsible for the area shall be entitled to authorize a foundation for the performance of functions specified /.../ with whom a corresponding contract under public law shall be concluded

Legal status of EKKA (2)



- Ministry of Education and Research decided, on the basis of a contract under public law, to **authorise this function to be performed by the Archimedes Foundation**, the founder of which is the Republic of Estonia with the founder's rights being exercised by the **Ministry of Education and Research**. The Foundation was established in 1997 as a legal person governed by private law to process international cooperation programmes in the field of education and research in Estonia.

Legal status of EKKA (3)



- EKKA is a structural unit of the Archimedes Foundation, which **performs independent functions** and was set up in 2009 to continue the work by the Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Centre and the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (operating from 1997 to 2008).
- **The Statutes of EKKA** has been approved by the Supervisory Body of the Foundation Archimedes.



- In order to ensure the independence of assessing the quality of higher education, the Supervisory Body of Foundation Archimedse has **delegated** the approval of the EKKA regulations and the adoption of assessment decisions exclusively to EKKA.
- **EKKA is independent in developing its principles and procedures for quality assessment and in adopting assessment decisions.** The **decisions** by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for HE regarding evaluation of the quality of higher education are **final**.



- Based on § 10 (4) of the Universities Act:
*In addition to the assessment council, EKKA shall involve experts in its activity, follow international principles in its activity, establishes and **publishes the conditions and procedure for institutional accreditation and quality assessment** proceeding from the differences of different types of educational institutions*
- Regulations are developed in cooperation with **all the main stakeholders** - the HE representatives, employers, MoE and the students.

EKKA – Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education



- Founded **January 2009** on the basis of
Estonian HE Accreditation Center
- Two councils **Quality Assessment Council for HE**
Quality Assessment Council for VET
- Staff **9 staff members + accountant**



Main activities

- Development of principles and procedures of external evaluation
- **Assessment of the quality of study programme groups (SPG) in HE**
- **Institutional accreditation (IA) in HE**
- **Accreditation of study program groups in VET**
- Training and counselling
- Publications
- International cooperation

EKKA - Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency

Eesti Kõrghariduse Kvaliteediagentuur

Admission valid until: 2018-03-31 (listed since 2013-10-23)

Based in*: Estonia

Agency operates in**: Estonia

Reports by the agency: <http://www.ekka.archimedes.ee/universities/quality-assessment-of-study-programme-groups/assessment-decisions-and-reports>

External review report: [EKKA External Review Report 2013.pdf](#)
[2013_03_EKKA_ApprovalDecision.pdf](#)

International activities (1)



- Full member of ENQA, EQAR, INQAAHE, CEENQA
- Lead the project „Creation and Capacity Building of Quality Assurance Agency for Professional Education in Republic of Moldova“, 2014-2015. Outcome: Quality Agency in Moldova (ANACIP)
- Conducted accreditation of 26 Master study programmes in Law in 13 HEI-s in Moldova
- Junior partner in the Twinning project with Finland in Azebaidjan: „Support to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Further Adherence of the Higher Education System to the European Higher Education Area“

International activities (2)



- EKKA's staff members participated in the Twinning projects in Kosovo and Armenia
- EKKA's Director for International Cooperation – Director of the Board of INQAAHE
- Board members at the quality agencies in Russia (NCPA) and Kazakhstan (IQAA)
- Experts at evaluations in Lithuania, Kosovo, Kazakhstan

HE QA COUNCIL

13 members

In 2015: 7 from HEI-s
5 employers/other org
1 student representative

VET QA COUNCIL

max 13 members

In 2014: 8 representatives
of employers, 2 from MoE,
2 from partner
organisations

**DIRECTOR OF
EKKA
&
EKKA BUREAU**

- selects the Director of EKKA
- approves the composition of the EKKA QAC
- approves the statutes of EKKA QAC

FOUNDATION ARCHIMEDES SUPERVISORY BOARD

- A foundation (governed by private law) may be authorized to perform the functions of the agency
- QA decisions of the QAC are final
- No representatives of the MOE, no rectors, no vice rectors
- Fixed roles of submitting candidates to the EKKA QAC
- Functions of the HE quality agency (EKKA)

UNIVERSITIES ACT

Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency

EKKA QUALITY ASSESSMENT COUNCILS

- approving the quality assessment regulations
- adopting assessment decisions
- approving EKKA's development and action plans (joint sessions)

Director of EKKA

- EKKA's general management
- ensuring the compliance of EKKA's activities with legislation and regulations for evaluations
- staff development
- management of financial matters
- reporting

EKKA Office

Assessment Director (IA): institutional accreditation, international cooperation, development activities; feedback system, periodical reviews.

Assessment Director (SPG): initial assessment, re-evaluation, and quality assessment of study programme groups; Secretary of the EKKA HE Quality Assessment Council;

Assessment Director(VET): accreditation of study programme groups min VET; Secretary of the Quality Assessment Council for VET;

Information Manager: communications, feedback, administration of evaluation platforms; coordination of review panels

Lawyer: regulations, contracts, drafts of assessment decisions, appeals

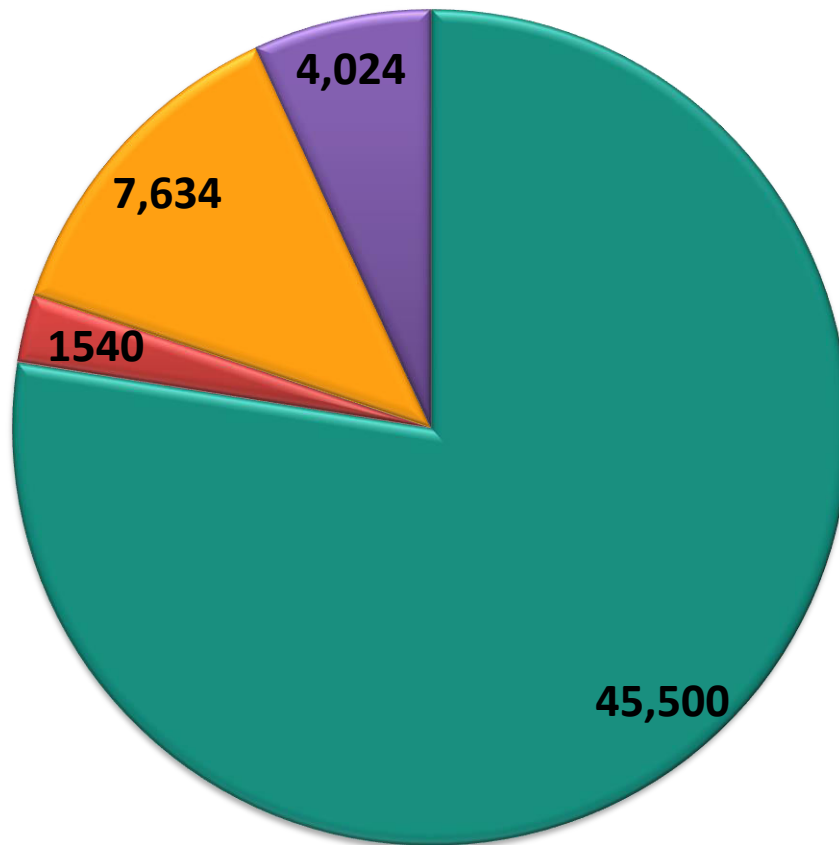
Assessment Coordinator (HE): coordination of review panels, document management, correspondence

Assessment Coordinator (VET): coordination of review panels, document management, project management

Accountant: accounting, financial reporting

Other support services at the level of the Foundation Archimedes: Insourcing of IT; central Records Management System

Types of HEI-s and student numbers 2015



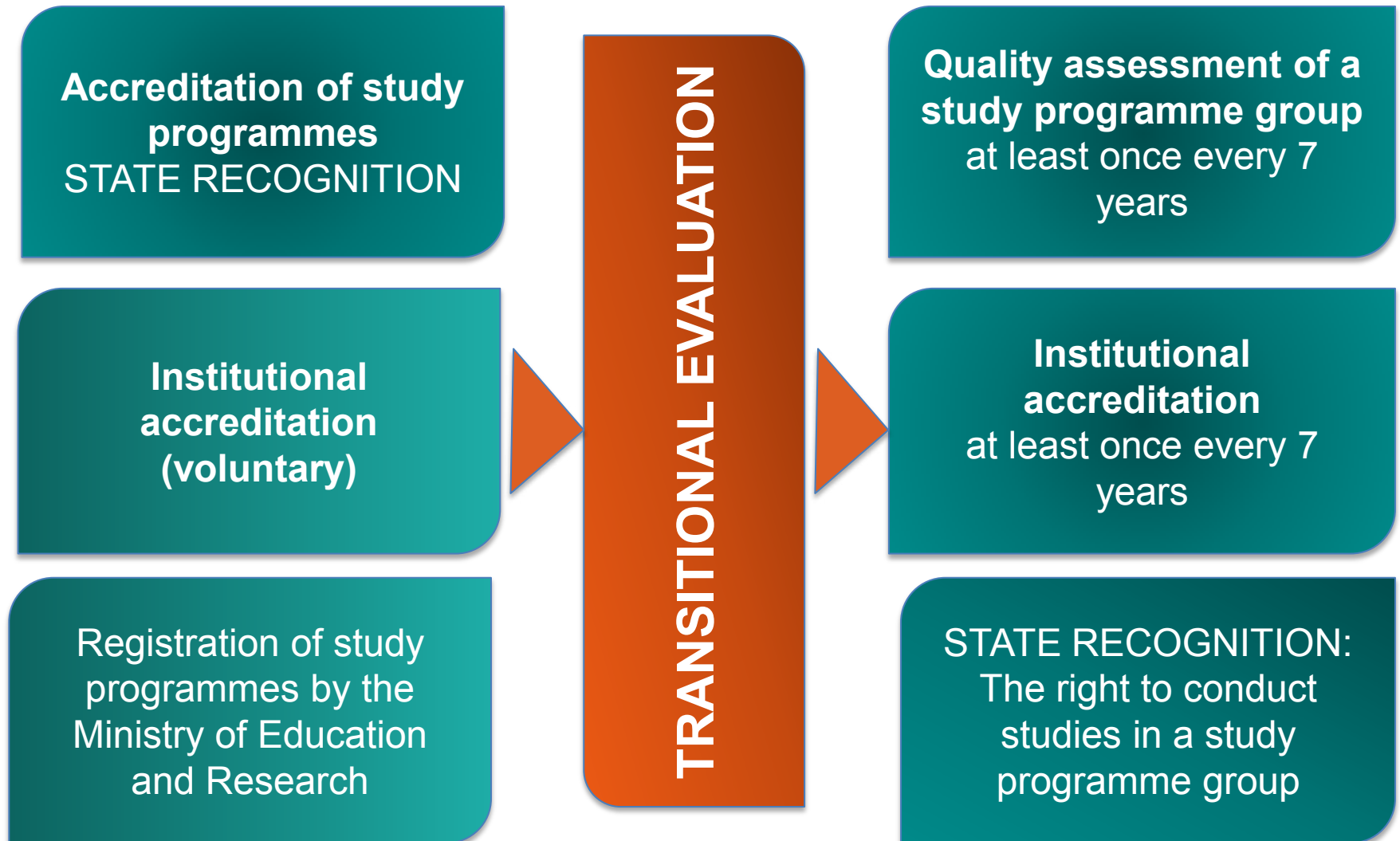
- 6 public universities
- 1 private university
- 8 state institutions of prof HE
- 7 private institutions of prof HE

Higher Education Quality Assessment System in Estonia

1997-2009

2009-2011

2011 ...



Shared responsibilities for QA

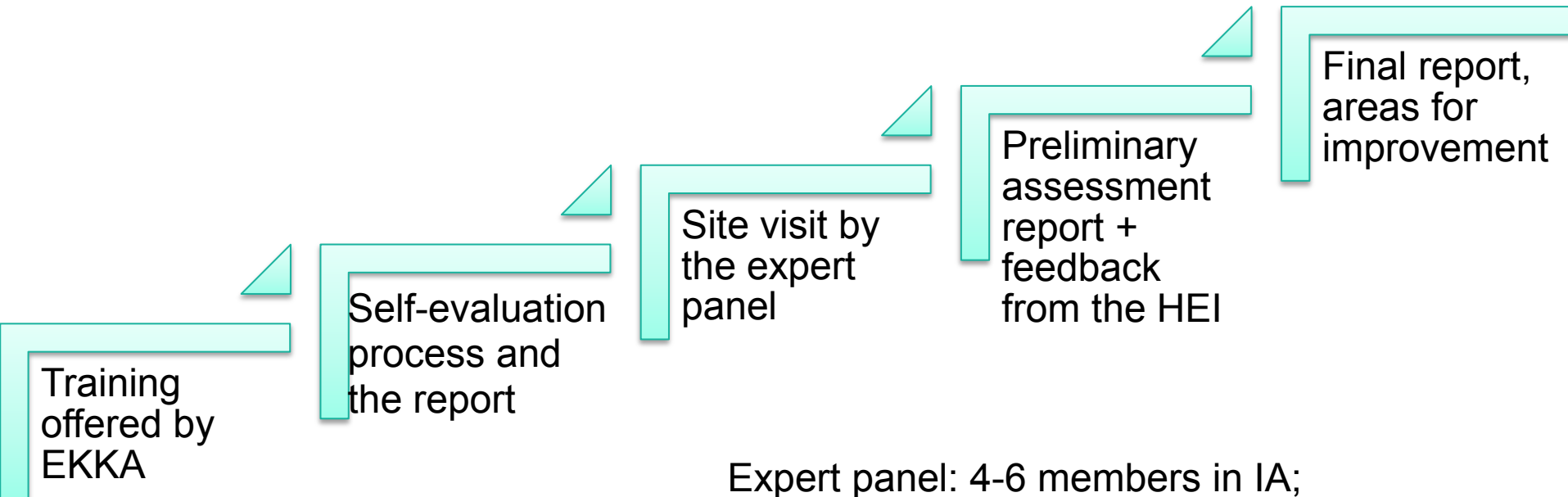
The Government or MoE	Institutions	EKKA
<p>Granting the right to conduct studies in study programme groups, based on the results of the assessments of SPGs, carried out by EKKA, checking whether the minimum standards set in the law are met.</p> <p>Financing partly based on quality assessment results</p>	<p>Main responsibility for the quality and continuous improvement of the education provided.</p> <p>Strategic management (including quality management)</p> <p>Regular internal evaluation and benchmarking</p>	<p>Promoting the quality in cooperation with HE and VET institutions through external assessments.</p> <p>Institutional accreditation (IA)</p> <p>Quality assessment /Accreditation of study programme groups (SPG)</p> <p>Initial assessment of SPGs in HE</p>

Accountability vs Enhancement



Focused on accountability	Focused on enhancement
<u>Transitional evaluation and re-evaluation</u>	<u>Institutional accreditation</u>
<u>Initial assessment of a study programme group</u>	<u>Quality assessment of study programme groups</u>
Assessment of joint programmes	

Evaluation model in IA and SPG assessment



Expert panel: 4-6 members in IA;
Number of experts in SPG depends on the number of programmes.

At least 1 student, 1 employer/external stakeholder.

Experts team supported by the assessment coordinator.

Purpose of IA (1)



The purpose of IA is to support the **development of strategic management and culture of quality** in HEIs, **inform stakeholders of the outcomes** of the main activities thereof, and **enhance the reliability and competitiveness** of Estonian higher education.



Areas of assessment:

1. Organisational management and performance

- General management
- Personnel management
- Management of resources and infrastructure

2. Teaching and learning

- Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body
- Study programme development
- Student academic progress and student assessment
- Support processes for learning
- Student academic progress and student assessment



3. Research, development and/or other creative activity (RDC)

- RDC effectiveness
- RDC resources and support processes
- Student research supervision and doctoral studies

4. Service to society

- Popularisation of core activities of a higher education institution and the involvement of an institution of higher education in social development
- In-service training and other educational activities for the general public
- Other public-oriented activities

IA decision by QA Council (1)



- QA Council makes the accreditation decision **within 3 months** after receiving the expert report
- **The decision is based on:**
 - the **Self-Evaluation report** of the institution
 - **expert report** (assessments on every assessment area, i.e. whether the area conforms to the requirements, conforms partially to the requirements, does not conform to requirements)
 - **HEI's comments** on the expert report
 - **Other relevant material** submitted at the request of the Council

IA decision by QA Council (2)



- Council decides to accredit the HEI
 - **for 7 years**
 - **for 3 years**
 - **not to accredit**
- Also possible to accredit for 7 years with **an additional condition** – ie, the HEI needs to remove certain deficiencies by the designated time and report to the Council; the Council decides whether the deficiencies have been satisfactorily eliminated or not.

Follow-up activities in IA



- EKKA assumes that the responsibility for resolving the problems pointed out in assessment reports and for continuous improvement activities lies with the higher education institutions.
- **Two years after the adoption of the decision to accredit the higher education institution for seven years**, EKKA asks the institution to give the Quality Assessment Council a written review of the planned and implemented activities deriving from the recommendations presented in the assessment report, as well as their results.

IA conducted by foreign agency

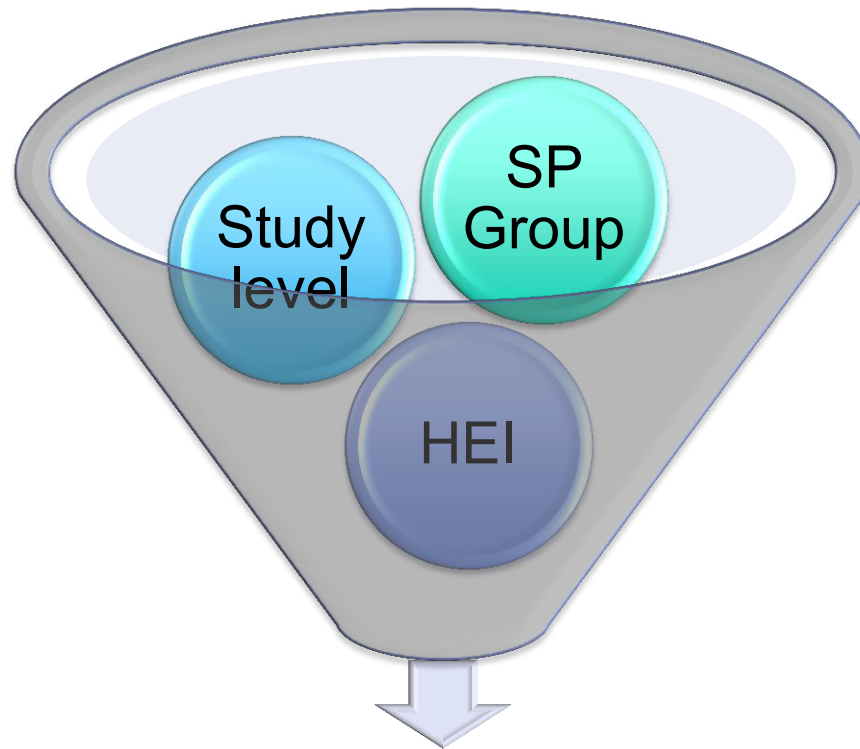


- Involving competent Evaluation Authorities of foreign countries is possible
- Agreement between the HEI, the foreign agency and EKKA needed

Study programme group assessment

Study programme groups in HE

1. **Teacher training and educational science**
2. **Humanities** (*excluding theology*)
3. **Languages and cultures**
4. **Arts** (*fine arts, graphic and audiovisual arts, design, craft skills*)
5. **Performing arts**
6. **Theology**
7. **Journalism and information**
8. **Psychology**
9. **Social science** (*excluding psychology*)
10. **Law**
11. **Business and administration**
12. **Social services**
13. **Personal services**
14. **National defence**
15. **Public security**
16. **Life sciences**
17. **Environmental protection**
18. **Physical sciences**
19. **Informatics and information technology**
20. **Mathematics and statistics**
21. **Architecture and building**
22. **Engineering, manufacturing and technology**
23. **Agriculture, forestry and fishery**
24. **Veterinary**
25. **Medicine** (*including dental services*)
26. **Health care**
27. **Sports**
28. **Transport services**



Assessment unit



Quality assessment of SPGs **focuses on study programmes, the content and organisation of studies and on instruction-related development activities within a study programme group.** These aspects are not evaluated in the course of institutional accreditation.

Assessment areas:

- study programme and study programme development
- resources
- teaching and learning
- teaching staff
- students

Main purpose of the QA of SPG



- Quality assessment of a SPG involves the assessment of the **conformity** of study programmes and the studies and development activities that take place on their basis to legislation, national and international standards and developmental directions
with the purpose of supporting the self-development of HEI and providing recommendations to improve the quality of studies.
- QA of SPG is **not followed by sanctions** – expert assessments should be considered recommendations.

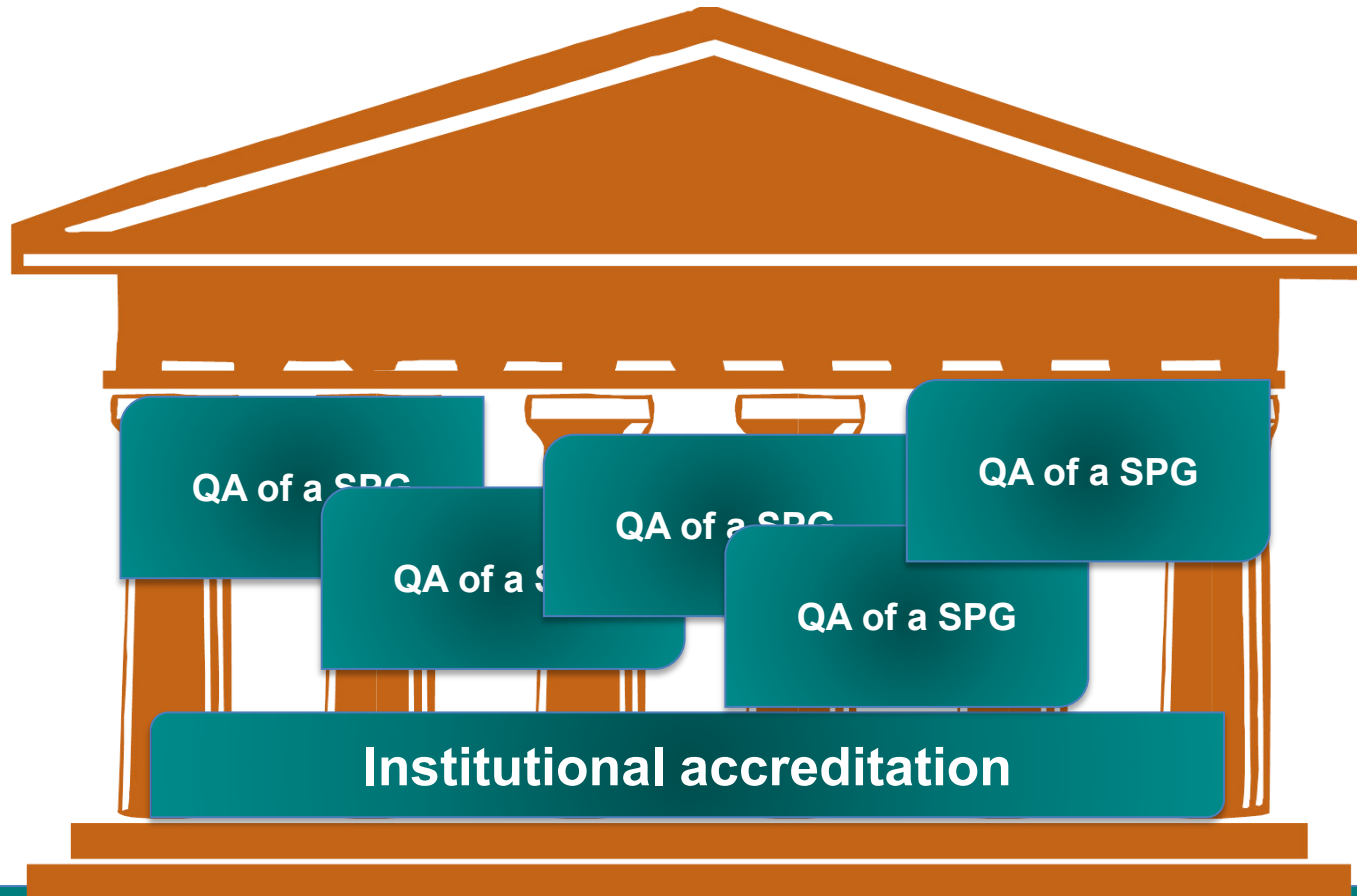
Council's decision in SPG assessment



The Council will make the decision to

- Conduct the next assessment in 7 years
- Conduct the next assessment of SPG in less than 7 years, if serious deficiencies are detected by the expert team

External Quality Assurance 2014



Initial assessment → Right to conduct studies in a study program group

Financing of EQA activities



- Long-term plan agreed with HEI-s and MoE (till 2017) – state budget
- Appropriations from the state budget cover both
 - the costs directly associated with the external evaluations and
 - the costs connected with a broader quality development of higher education (trainings, conferences, seminars, publications of results, analyses)
- Depending on the composition of the committee, the cost of 1 assessment is between 20 000 – 35 000 euros.
- The costs of initial evaluation of the study programme (entering the HE market) has to be covered by the HEIs.



ESTONIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Doctoral programmes

180-240 ECTS credits
(3 to 4 years)

Integrated Bachelor's and Master's programmes

300-360 ECTS or
(5 to 6 years)

Master's programmes

60-120 ECTS credits
(1 to 2 years)

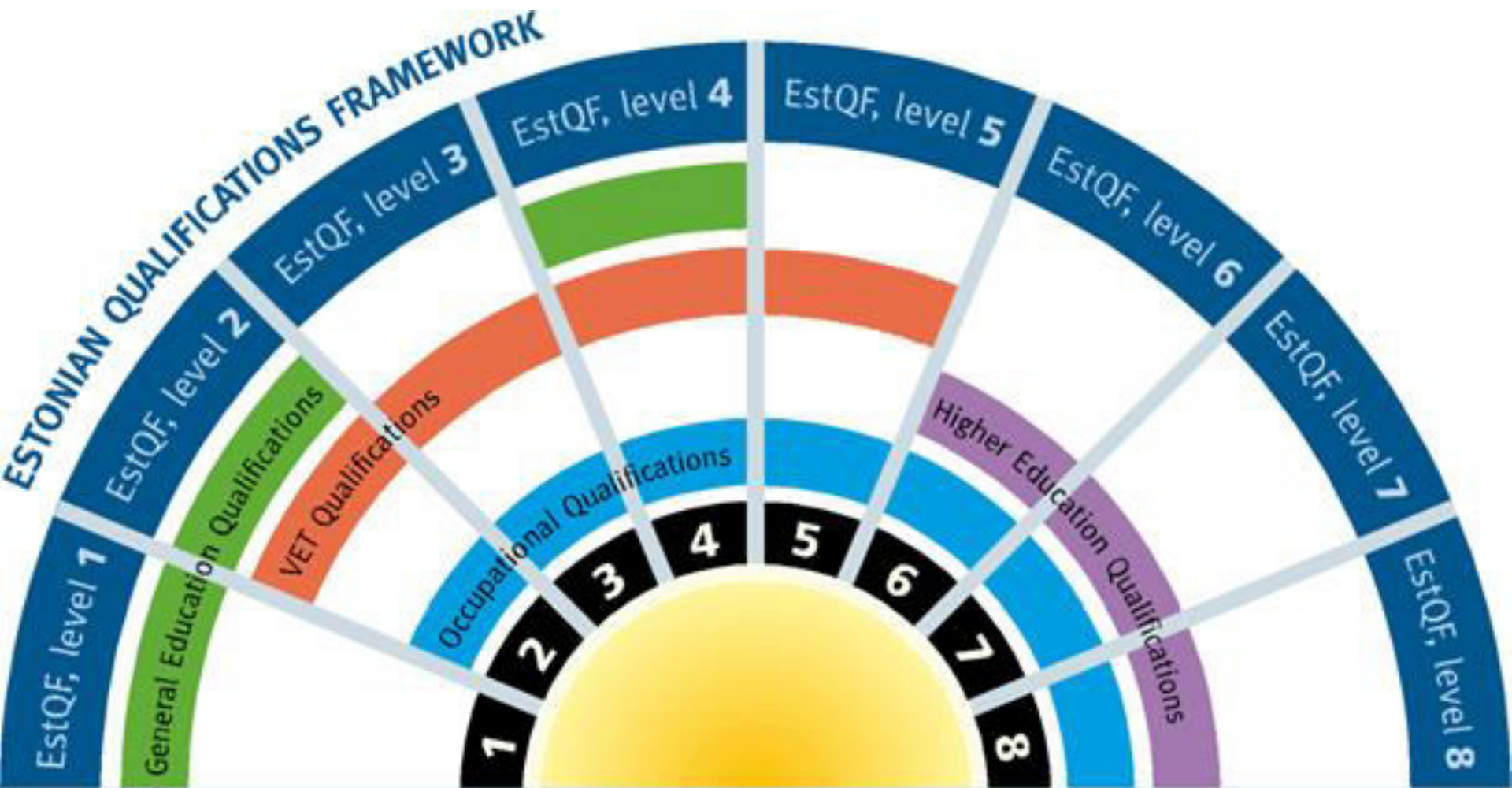
Bachelor's programmes

180-240 ECTS credits
(3 to 4 years)

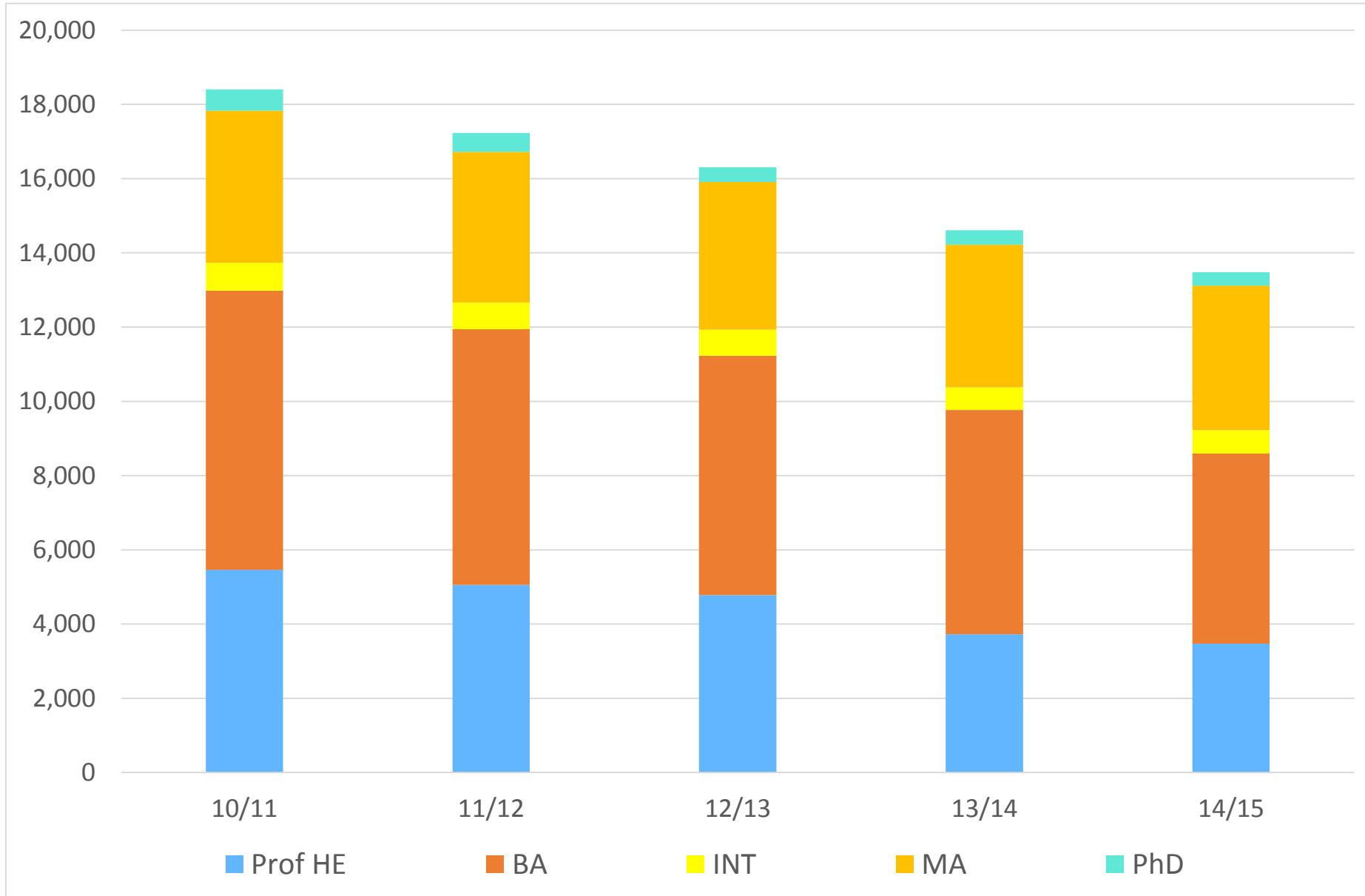
Professional higher education programmes

180-270 ECTS credits
(3 to 4.5 years)

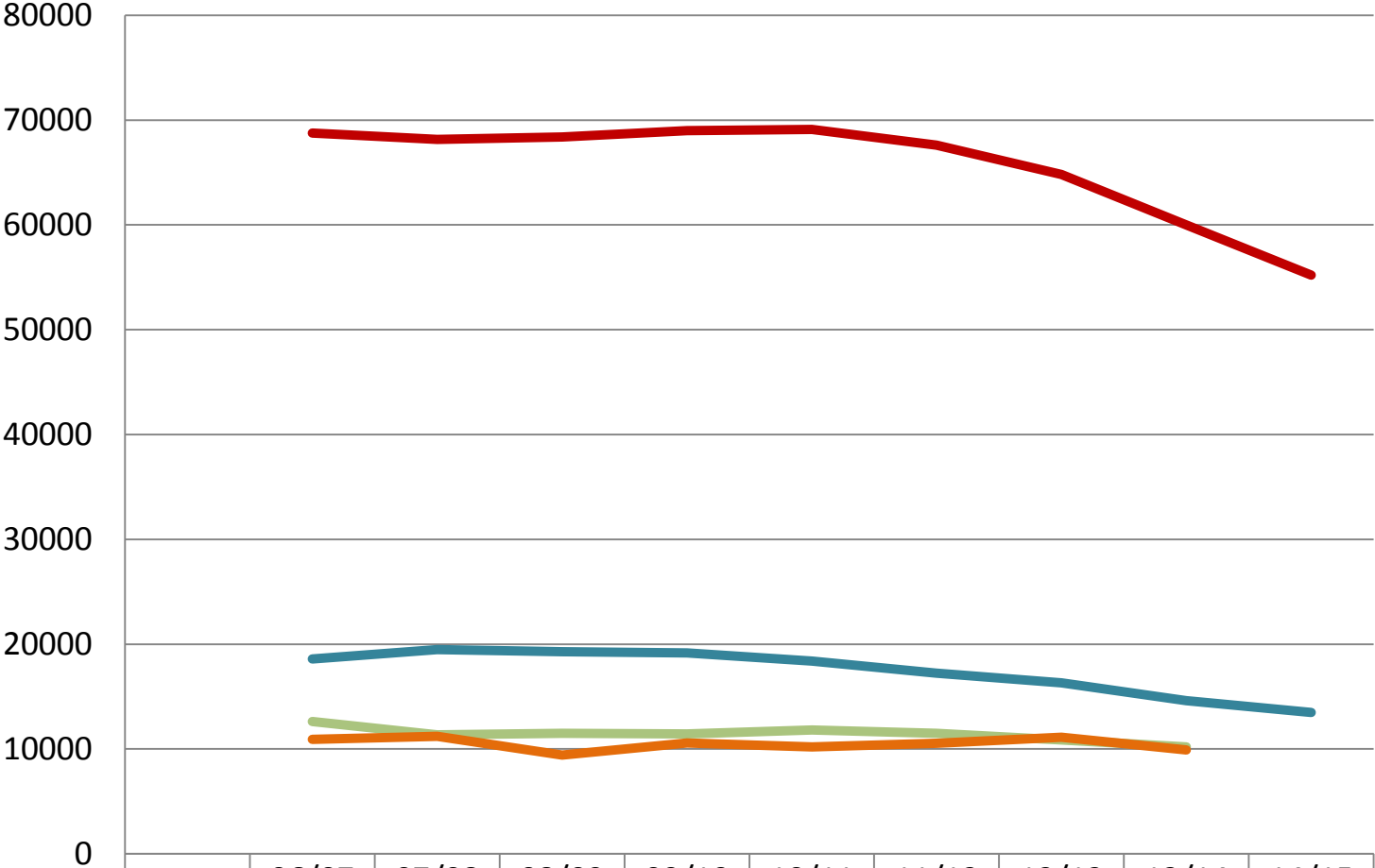
Estonian Qualifications Framework



Admission 2009-2014



Dynamics in Student Numbers in Estonia



	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Number of admitted students	18597	19482	19292	19167	18404	17233	16305	14606	13477
Number of students	68767	68168	68399	68985	69113	67607	64806	59998	55214
Number of graduates	12612	11345	11489	11450	11828	11497	10867	10190	
Number of interruption cases	10922	11218	9423	10570	10189	10542	11109	9912	

