

Evaluation report

Evaluated point	Grade	Comments
Scientific impact of research	Good	<p>The absolute number of 1.1 publications is large (at around 120 per annum in recent years), but still relatively modest with respect to the number of FTE staff. Researchers at UT did emphasise a shift away from teaching towards research which it hopes will help to strengthen these figures. The articles that are published do seem to be of good quality. The Category Normalized Citation Impact is the highest among the Estonian institutions evaluated and has been rising consistently. This would imply that there is a strong emphasis on selectively publishing work in high-visibility leading research journals and monographs have been published with leading international publishers (Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Palgrave Macmillan).</p> <p>Research project funding has remained fairly static over the period, although there have been systematic steady increases in both domestic and international R&D contracts.</p>
Sustainability and potential of research	Good	<p>UT is confronted with the same demographic facts as other universities: there is a decline in the generation potentially going to higher education. The organisational structure of the university has been adjusted from 9 to 4 faculties to deal with the future situation. The challenge is how to create an academic career model which will attract the best young scientists to work at the university in an increasingly competitive situation. At the highest administrative level of the university, the issue seemed to not to have been advanced further than a consideration of the criteria to be used in building an academic career model. Senior management may be concerned that limiting the use of fixed term contracts will restrict the right of the university to select the best candidates for a post. They may also believe that the law precludes the possibility of promotion (as opposed to election in open competition) and of requiring academics retire at a specific age. The Faculty has to deal with the consequences of the constraints introduced by these assumptions. Consequently, determination of the academic career models is beyond the control of the Faculty.</p> <p>Incentive schemes have been introduced across the Faculty with precise details determined by different units, which take the form of financial rewards, either directly to the academic and/or funds for research or professional travel expenses.</p> <p>It should also be noted that researchers of the university seem to be extensively engaged in different international</p>

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		<p>networks of researchers and this has led to a significant number of international research projects. International projects play a very significant role in the amount and structure of R&D revenue.</p> <p>A significant increase in numbers of researchers with PhD level degree should be noted (from 172 in 2010 to 244 in 2015). The number of early career researchers allows foreseeing sustainability of research in Social Science. There seems to be a good gender balance of staff, including in visible leadership positions in different research departments.</p> <p>Initiatives to support 'returning academics' to Estonia (including financial from the development fund of the Faculty) from foreign universities is a promising practice in terms of sustainability.</p>
Societal importance of research	Good	<p>Faculty engage in communication of their research results to State bodies widely. For example, researchers are engaged in the Board of Eesti Pank, National Crime Prevention Council, the Fiscal Council of Estonia, the Ministry of Education and Research and are regular contact with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Affairs. Researchers of the University seem to be actively communicating their research results to the national media. It is good that the Faculty seeks for new ways of spreading their research results, quite intensive webinars (twice per month) seem to be a promising practice. It is not clear whether the Faculty takes into account the aforementioned activities of researchers from the point of view of remuneration, esp. taking into account that these activities, while being of utmost importance, can nevertheless become an obstacle for a more thorough engagement in fundamental research. There was an indication that the 'third role' of researchers is also being assessed as an impact of their research, however it is not clear to what extent this is given significant weight in workload models.</p> <p>Applied R&D is explicitly valued and this attitude should be cherished and cultivated. Projects of applied R&D are also being considered as a channel to engage in communication with practice and thus strengthen an influence of research results upon decision-making in practice. The Faculty also have strategic plans to strengthen societal impact of their research in the future, especially with provision of common space for researchers and practitioners (start-ups) at the future Delta building.</p>

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<p>Scientific basis in the field is sufficient to conduct doctoral studies. (This question should be answered only if: a) institution being evaluated is conducting doctoral studies and; b) The field being evaluated is proposed to grant positive evaluation. If these conditions are met then: a) If the level of scientific basis is sufficient for conducting doctoral studies in every structural unit being evaluated, then the answer should be „yes“; b) If the scientific basis is not sufficient in some structural units, then those units should be listed.)</p>		<p>A strength of UT is the non-rigid hierarchical structure, which fosters creativity and emphasises agency, resulting in a positive institutional culture.</p> <p>For doctoral students, careers in academia are not presented as the only option and they are treated as co-workers even while matriculated as a student. Doctoral students are given opportunities to interact with undergraduate students, gaining experience as tutors or project/dissertation supervision. They also have opportunities to gain experience outside of UT, often internationally, which ensures they have a wide perspective and varied experience of academic working. The Estonian Doctoral School provision is also positively utilised: for example, funding is available for conference visits and for the appointment of ‘consultants’ (often international) on PhD projects and students are encouraged to take full advantage of this. Although the selected group of students whom the evaluators me reported not using the UT careers service, they were nevertheless aware that the service was available and that careers outside academia was also a possibility, with the recognition that their doctoral training was giving them many transferrable skills.</p>

Summary assessment

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<p>Areas of special note as appropriate (Where necessary indicate sub-fields, assessment criteria, and/or structural units which, in the committee's opinion, were of a notably high level.)</p>		<p>The evaluators have no further comments for special note.</p>
<p>Areas in need of improvement as appropriate (Where necessary indicate sub-fields of the field being evaluated, assessment criteria, and/or structural units which, in the committee's opinion, revealed significant shortcomings.)</p>		<p>No areas in need of improvement were noted.</p>
<p>Assessment proposal to the Minister of Education and Research</p>	<p>To grant positive evaluation</p>	<p>UT is performing R&D at a high level of competitiveness in the Social Science.</p>

Feedback

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<p>Feedback for institution (This question should be answered only if the institution asked for feedback from the evaluation committee in the self-report (about up to three specific areas of R&D which it finds to be currently important, e.g., related to its development plan).)</p>	<p>UT asked the evaluation team specifically to comment on the policy of 'project-based admission to PhD studies'. This is a practice that is common in many academic areas in international institutions. Indeed, in some areas of science and technology, it would be impossible to do otherwise. Therefore, it is the opinion of the evaluation team that there is no intrinsic reason why students should not be admitted on this basis and we see no impediment to their training and development as independent researchers in such a context.</p> <p>Obviously, there is a concern that some areas of Social Sciences operate on a different funding basis where individual researchers work without larger research groupings and often without significant external funding. In such sub-fields, it is not clear from where support for doctoral candidates would be sourced. Care should be taken in devising any new funding model that there are unintended consequences of change.</p>
<p>Suggestions for unit, institution, state etc. (As appropriate, committee can give additional feedback for the structural unit, the institution, or the State (please specify whom feedback is directed to) according to the directive assessment criteria for regular evaluation (article 7).</p>	<p>No further comments.</p>