

Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Centre

Evaluation of Research in Philosophy (6.2)

Institutes evaluated

Tallinn University
Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Social Sciences

Evaluation dates
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Part I

General Overview

At the request of the Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Centre, Tallinn (EHEAC), the evaluation team (hereafter named the “Team”) visited an institute in Estonia, carrying out research activities in Philosophy. The evaluation team comprised Prof. Timo Airaksinen (University of Helsinki), Prof. Robert Zwijnenberg (University of Leiden) and Prof. Panagiotis Dimas (University of Oslo).

The institution to be evaluated was:

Tallinn University (TU)

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Social Sciences

- Chair of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion (Head: Prof. Mart Raukas)
- Chair of Philosophy and Methodology of Science (Assoc. Prof. Enn Kasak)

The Team was provided in advance with a self-assessment report from the institution, prepared by the members of their research groupings.

After a brief orientation meeting at EHEAC, the Team visited the institution over one day. At these meetings staff members of the various Chairs presented their work. During these presentations as well as during the subsequent discussions additional information about the research activities was provided. This included additional documents such as copies of published papers.

Approach to the evaluation

The Team was asked to:

1. Judge the activities of research and development in the units evaluated and the research topics implemented by them to ensure the governmental funding for internationally recognised research and development.
2. Identify deficiencies in the activities of research and development unit.
3. Give recommendations on the development concerning research and development and research areas to the state of Estonia.

The Team received the following materials: A working schedule, principles and criteria for evaluation of the research units, evaluation guidelines for the ranking of research units, and a self-evaluation report created by the Department.

On a first evaluation point, the *quality of the research activities* was considered. This assessment is largely based on the records of scientific publications.

Excellent	<i>The majority of the submitted works are at a high international level and virtually all others at a good international level.</i>
<i>Excellent to good</i>	<i>At least one third of the submitted works are at a high international level and many others at a good international level, these together comprise a clear majority.</i>
Good	<i>The majority of the submitted works are at least at a good international level and virtually all others at a fair international level</i>
<i>Good to satisfactory</i>	<i>At least one third of the submitted works are at a good international level and many others at a fair international level, these together comprise a clear majority</i>
Satisfactory	<i>The majority of the submitted works are at least at a fair international level</i>
<i>Satisfactory to unsatisfactory</i>	<i>A minority of the submitted works are at a fair international level</i>
Unsatisfactory	<i>None, or virtually none, of the submitted works are at a fair international level</i>

Regarding the grading of the research activities, the Team was instructed by the EHEAC to reserve the term **excellent** for groups, which were found to be among the best 10% of the European groups in the corresponding field. Similarly, the term **excellent to good** should be used if the evaluated group was found to be among the best 25 % of corresponding European groups. The full scale comprised 7 levels, in addition to the highest ones the grades are **good**, **good to satisfactory**, **satisfactory**, **satisfactory to unsatisfactory**, and **unsatisfactory**.

Secondly, the *over-all capability* of a research unit was evaluated based on a the combined assessment of the following criteria (each graded in three levels):

	Grade 0	Grade 1	Grade 2
Originality/novelty of past and ongoing research activity	descriptive, no novelty	some novelty/originality	original/novel
The strategy and perspective of research	no or bad strategy, no or unclear perspective for further research	fair strategy and perspective for further research	clear strategy and very perspective for further research
Multidisciplinarity and relevance for other research areas	no multidisciplinarity, no relevant for other research areas	some multidisciplinarity, some relevance	good multidisciplinarity, good relevance for other research areas
The competence of research groups and their capability for development	low competence	there is competence, but no young postgraduate and postdoctoral students	there is competence and postgraduate and postdoctoral students
National and international co-operation	no particular national and international co-operation	some national/international co-operation	good or tight national/international co-operation
Success in applying for funds and grants	no particular success	fair success	applying successfully for grants and funds

Excellent - 12-10 (total grade), **Good** - 9-7 (total grade), **Satisfactory** - 6-4 (total grade) and **Unsatisfactory** - 3-0 (total grade).

As the result of this assessment one of the four grades **excellent, good, satisfactory** or **unsatisfactory** was given for the group.

Thirdly, the *implementation opportunities* for the research results and their importance for the Estonian society were commented.

Finally, on a fourth evaluation point *the critical comments and recommendations* were asked to given by the expert team.

Part II

General Comments

This evaluation takes its point of departure from the generally acknowledged requirements of research at an international mid to high level. We have been little focused on the quantity of pages published, our main concern is the quality of the venues of publication. The reason for this is simple. There is a vast amount of pages being published world wide and only a small minority of them are being read. To make any mark whatsoever, the members of the department have to display their reasearch in those venues that are attractive to the serious and well respected international scholars.

Part III

Evaluation of institution

Department of Philosophy (*Head: Prof. Mart Raukas*)

The main fields of scientific work of the Department include:

Since 2000 the Department of Practical Philosophy has reoriented itself in research of more practical and applied philosophical problems. Although the four full-time members of the staff have indeed different research sympathies:

- philosophy of religion and the applications of the theory of argumentation (Prof. Mart Raukas);
- analysis of scientific and pseudoscientific beliefs (Associate Professor Enn Kasak);
- social philosophy, issues of social memory and Holocaust (Associate Professor Siobhan Kattago);
- philosophical analysis of modern folklore (Associate Professor Mare Kõiva)

The staff of the department

The Department of Philosophy comprises two units: Chair of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion (Prof. Mart Raukas) and Chair of Philosophy of Science and Methodology (Assoc. Prof. Enn Kasak).

Chair of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion

Head of the chair:

- Professor **Mart Raukas** (born 1960) – PhD in Philosophy 1988

Main research interests:

- Philosophy of religion
- Philosophical interpretations
- Theory of Referring
- Philosophy of Wittgenstein; The philosophical analysis of certainty and trust
- Philosophical problems of Law
- Military ethics

Staff of the chair:

- Associated Professor **Siobhan Kattago** - PhD in sociology 1997

Main research interests: - Identity and social memory (the research group by the chair:
 Prof. Mart Raukas, Jaano Räsä, Enn Kasak)
 - Holocaust studies

- Visiting Research Fellow Dr. **Eero Loone** (born 1935) - DSc in Philosophy 1984

Main research interests: - Political Philosophy
 - Philosophy of History
 - History of Estonian Philosophy
 - 20th Century History

Chair of Philosophy of Science and Methodology

Head of the chair:

- Associate Professor **Enn Kasak** (born 1954) – PhD in theoretical physics 1990

Main research interests: - Philosophy of science
 - Conceptual analysis of pseudoscientific thinking
 - Argumentation theory and informal logic
 - Philosophical problems of cosmology

Staff of the chair:

- Associate Professor **Mare Kõiva** (born 1954) – PhD in folkloristics 1990

Main research interests: - Philosophy of myth
 - Contemporary folklore and misbeliefs

Research Grants from Estonian Science Foundation

Certainty, Trust, Contract Law (Grant Nr. 4947) Grantholder: **M.Raukas.** Research team: E.Kasak,, M.Kingisepp, S.Kattago, M.Kõiva, W. de Pater, A.Vaingold, O.Sander, R.Raave, R.Sõlg. Duration of the project: 2000-2004. Finances: 210,000 EEK

Conceptual analysis of pseudoscientific thinking (Grant Nr. 4139). Grant holder: **E. Kasak.** Duration: 2000-2001. Finances: 28 000 EEK

General Comments

1. The publications venues are not of a particularly ambitious nature.
2. Many of the publications are published in journals edited by the authors themselves or their colleagues.
3. The publications of the members of the department do not give evidence of a unified and coherent research profile.
4. It is unclear how much some of the scholars that are listed as department members participate in the research activities of the department, given their part time affiliation and its extend.

Evaluation of Research Activities

The Team of evaluators judged the overall quality of the research to be *satisfactory to unsatisfactory*

Evaluation of Overall Capability

The Team of evaluators judged the overall capability of the research to be *satisfactory*

	Grade
Originality/novelty of past and ongoing research activity	1
The strategy and perspective of research	0
Multidisciplinarity and relevance for other research areas	0
The competence of research groups and their capability for development	1
National and international co-operation	1
Success in applying for funds and grants	1

The implementation opportunities for the research results and their importance for Estonian society

Potentially the importance of these scholars' research is great since philosophy in Estonia is at its formative stages. In particular, practical philosophy can be of use in many areas of public life and discourse.

Recommendations

1. **The members of the department must become more ambitious in choosing the journals they try to publish in.**
2. **They must also focus much more on the quality of the journals in which they publish than the quantity of pages they publish.**
3. **There is a clear need of establishing a more focused research profile in which several researchers and research trainees can participate in.**
4. **A more focused co-operation with internationally acknowledged scholars needs to be established.**