

## **Evaluation of the organisation of continuing education in Estonian universities**

The undertaking of the Estonian Network for University Continuing Education (ENUCE) with the purpose of developing UCE in Estonia

The evaluation of the organisation of continuing education in Estonian universities is a voluntary undertaking of the universities, belonging to the ENUCE, which is aimed at improving the organisation of continuing education in Estonian universities. Participation in evaluation is voluntary and intended to encourage self-improvement.

### **The objectives of evaluation:**

- the exchange of experience with the purpose of improving the organisation of continuing education in Estonia,
- mapping the situation of UCE in Estonia,
- the improvement of the quality of organisation of UCE,
- raising the competitiveness of UCE,
- stressing the importance of the role of continuing education in the activities of universities,
- the analysis of the relations between continuing and degree education, the explanation and the definition of the role of UCE as a part of life-long learning.

### **What is evaluated?**

The general organisation of continuing education in Estonian universities, the distribution of the roles between the structural units dealing with continuing education and their mutual cooperation, the objectives, the strategies of continuing education, the basic elements of designing curricula and the price formation, the selection of the teaching staff, the communication with learners, the systems of quality assessment, the connections between continuing education and other types of instruction at a university, the choice of teaching methods practised in continuing education, etc. are evaluated.

### **Who evaluates?**

- Stage 1: Mutual evaluation takes place – the commission, consisting of the university's teaching staff dealing with the organisation of continuing education and participating in actual

teaching at continuing education courses, evaluates the other university's continuing education organisation, and, on the contrary, the other university's commission evaluates its partner's work. The pairs of universities, participating in evaluation, are formed on mutual agreement.

- Stage 2. The commission consisting of the representatives of the Council of the Evaluation of Higher Education, the Ministry of Education, the universities and participants in continuing education evaluates all the universities.

## **APPENDIX 1 PLAN OF EVALUATION**

### **Stage 1: Mutual evaluation**

- Drawing up evaluation reports in the universities which are carrying out mutual evaluation (confirmed by the Vice-rector): 2 months.
- Universities form evaluation commissions of 3-5 members who acquaint themselves with self-evaluation reports of the partner university, then visit the university one month after having received the other university's self-evaluation report.
- The evaluation commission writes a report about the organisation of continuing education in its partner university (one month after having visited it).
- The two universities hold a seminar together to review the experience gained in evaluation.

### **Stage 2: Joint evaluation by the commission**

In October the ENUCE makes a proposal to form a joint commission consisting of the representatives of the Council of the Evaluation of Higher Education, the Ministry of Education, the universities and participants in continuing education. In November and December the commission visits and evaluates all the universities involved in evaluation in the current year.

### **Stage 3: Summarising seminar**

In the framework of the annual meeting, taking place in January, a summarising seminar is held to review the system of evaluation, in the case of need its improvement is decided and the plans for the evaluation in the new year are made.

## APPENDIX 2 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SELF-EVALUATION

### I Introduction

Why does the university participate in evaluation? What are the main problems which could be solved?

### II The context of continuing education

*The lead question: By which factors are the university's continuing education activities influenced?*

1. Legal context: which legal acts – laws, regulations - lay the foundation for the organisation of continuing education (financing, the learners' rights, the involvement of university lecturers, the issue of certificates, etc.). How is continuing education regulated at the university? How and by which means does the Ministry of Education influence continuing education (allocation of financial resources, regulations, etc.)?
  2. Economic and financial context (profitability of teaching certain specialities, state support). Competitiveness: who are your most important competitors?
  3. The geographical location of the university. Determine the geographical area for your activities.
  4. The position of continuing education at the university.
- Evaluation of the situation. What are the contextual opportunities and threats to continuing education which the university can define? What makes the continuing education offered by the university different from the competitor's education (strengths and weaknesses)?

### III Continuing education mission

*The lead question: What are the aims pursued by continuing education? Why is continuing education offered?*

1. What are the objectives and tasks of continuing education at the university?
  2. At which administrative level has the strategy of continuing education been approved of? Give a list of the main principles and the content of the strategy. Describe the strategy if you have it.
  3. How are the activities in the field of continuing education connected with the university's mission?
- Evaluation of the situation. Is the mission in conformity with activities?

### IV Organisation and people

*The lead question: Who deals with continuing education at the university? What is the division of labour like between them? What is the general organisation of continuing education at the university like?*

1. Who deals with continuing education at the university?
  2. Present the model of management of continuing education at the university. How does the structure function? How have the roles been distributed between the people involved in continuing education? Who is responsible for the coordination of activities in the field of continuing education? How and by whom is the decision made about what kind of continuing education is provided? Who makes economic decisions (price formation for continuing education, investments, salaries)?
  3. Characterise the cooperation between faculties (academic structural units) and administrative structural units in providing continuing education. Which fields of cooperation are the most important? Which fields of cooperation function very well, which cause problems?
  4. What is the proportion of the university's staff involved in continuing education?
- The organisation's strengths and weaknesses, plans and opportunities for introducing changes.

#### **V Resources**

*The lead question: Which resources are used for conducting courses? How are the resources used?*

1. The sources of financing continuing education (learners, companies, the state, projects) and their proportions.
  2. The use of finances for continuing education: the proportions between different items of expenditure. The connections of the finances of continuing education with the university (percentage of general expenditure paid to the university, paying salaries)
- The analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the resources for continuing education, the opportunities to attract new resources, threats.

#### **VI Learners**

*The lead question: To whom is continuing education provided – the involvement and support to learners?*

1. The statistical overview of learners. The trends in the recent years. Which groups of learners (target groups) do you consider most important at your university and why?
2. How does the university obtain information about the wishes/requirements of their "clients"?
3. What is the support system to learners like (advisory service, discounts)?
4. What is the status of learners participating in continuing education? Is it regulated?
5. If it is necessary to make a selection of applicants to continuing education, how is it carried out?
6. How is learner-satisfaction assessed?

- Self-evaluation. Strengths and weaknesses of the current activities, the opportunities to involve new learners.

### **VII Courses – curricula, methods, assessment**

*The lead question: What is taught, how are the courses accredited, how does the assessment take place?*

1. How is the course offered to the learners worked out (course design, registration/confirmation)?
2. Characterise the continuing education courses (the number of teaching hours, forms of instruction, the teaching staff, the proportions of independent and classroom work, etc.).
3. What are the assessment methods like used at continuing education courses?
4. Which certificates are issued? Under which conditions are they issued?

- Self-evaluation.

### **VIII Practical organisation of courses**

*The lead question: What are the conditions like for organising courses?*

1. Do the continuing education lecture-rooms, technical teaching aids, etc. differ significantly from the ones used in regular full-time university instruction?
2. Which additional services are offered to the participants in continuing education (the use of the Internet, coffee)?
3. Where are the courses conducted? Are they also conducted elsewhere, in addition to the university?

- Self-evaluation.

### **IX The quality of teaching and learning**

*The lead question: How is the high quality of instruction guaranteed?*

1. How is the high quality of instruction and learning guaranteed? How are instruction and learning assessed?
2. What are the principal differences between continuing education and the regular full-time university education? What are the differences between the staff of continuing education and the staff of the full-time university education? Are the quality requirements governing the whole university instruction applied in continuing education? Do the quality requirements applied in continuing education differ significantly from the ones used in full-time education?
3. Who is responsible for the quality of instruction?
4. Give a list of methods practised in quality management and guaranteeing high quality.

- Self-evaluation

## **X Marketing**

*The lead question: How do you provide information about your activities?*

1. Is there a special marketing strategy for continuing education at the university? What are the main elements of the strategy?
2. Do you make extra efforts to attract new learners? How?
3. Do you use the unified design for advertising continuing education at the university? Is there a logo/sign? Is the logo connected with the university's logo?

- Self-evaluation: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

## **XI Research and development activities**

*The lead question: How do development activities in continuing education take place?*

1. Present 1-3 innovations introduced in continuing education. Where did innovation start? How was it approved at the university?
2. Are the continuing education activities based on some research?
3. Who is involved in continuing education research activities?
4. Cooperation relationships. The activities aimed at involving institutions outside the university, the most important cooperation partners. International cooperation, the cooperation with companies, other universities.

- Self-evaluation: opportunities and threats.

## **XII Recognition of instruction**

*The lead question. How are the university degree education and continuing education connected?*

1. What is the basis for establishing the respectiveness of continuing education courses with university studies? Give examples.
2. What is the basis for APL? Which earlier taken examinations are recognised? Is APL and APEL possible and to which degree?

- Self-evaluation.