

Decision of the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education

The National University of Ostroh Academy Institutional accreditation decision

29.08.2025

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education decided to accredit the National University of Ostroh Academy for seven years.

Pursuant to section 44.1 of the Conditions and Procedure for Institutional Accreditation in Ukraine established on the basis of the authorisation contained in subsection 3 of § 38 of the Higher Education Act and in subsection 5 of § 24 of the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (hereinafter the Council) states the following:

1. The National University of Ostroh Academy (hereinafter NUOA) and the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA) agreed on the period for institutional accreditation on 20.11.2024.
2. By the decision of 12.02.2025, the Director of HAKA approved the composition of the Assessment Committee for Institutional Accreditation (hereinafter the Committee) as follows:

Eve Eisenschmidt (chair)	Professor, School of Educational Sciences; Tallinn University; Estonia
Kaija Kumpas-Lenk (secretary)	Office of academic affairs, Head of Development and Quality Division; Tallinn University of Technology; Estonia
Tamara Fedyk	Student member of the Panel; PhD student (Philology) at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University; Ukraine
Birute Klaas-Lang	Professor of Estonian as Foreign Language; University of Tartu; Estonia
Oleksandr Bondarenko	Director of Language Translation Agency "TRANSLATEL LTD"; Ukraine
Serhii Stepenko	Leading researcher; Chernihiv Polytechnic National University; Ukraine

3. NUOA submitted the self-evaluation report to HAKA on 14.03.2025, and the assessment coordinator of HAKA sent the self-evaluation report to the Committee on 28.03.2025.
4. The hybrid assessment visit to NUOA took place from 27th to 29th May 2025.



5. The Committee sent the draft assessment report to HAKA on 04.07.2025, HAKA forwarded the draft assessment report to the higher education institution for comment on 07.07.2025. The NUOA did not have any clarifications or comments on the report.
6. The Committee submitted the final assessment report to HAKA on 22.07.2025. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision. The report is available on the HAKA website.
7. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the final assessment report and the self-evaluation report to the members of the Council on 22.08.2025.
8. The Assessment Committee's assessments were as follows:

Assessment area	Assessment
Organisational management and performance	Conforms to requirements
Teaching and learning	Conforms to requirements
Research, development and/or other creative activities (RDC)	Conforms to requirements
Service to society	Conforms to requirements

★ Worthy of Recognition

1. Sub-area of general management. NUOA has demonstrated excellence in general management – a clear mission and vision aligned with national priorities, strategic alignment and a strong commitment to societal needs, supported by robust internal quality assurance and inclusive leadership.
2. Sub-area of other public-oriented activities. Consistent implementation of impactful and creative public-oriented initiatives. Fostering community building through the holistic integration of social, educational and cultural activities by involving students and the entire university.
9. At its meeting of 29 August 2025, with the participation of 10 members, the Council discussed the received documents and decided to highlight from the assessment report the following strengths¹, areas of concern and recommendations² and opportunities for further improvement³ regarding NUOA.

9.1 ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Strengths

1. Clear alignment between national and university strategy and strong commitment to societal needs is part of academic activities.

¹ Achievements that exceed the level of the standard (not compliance with the standard) are presented as strengths.

² Areas of concern and recommendations point to shortcomings in meeting the requirements of the institutional accreditation standard and affect the formation of the final decision of the Council.

³ Opportunities for further improvement are proposals for improvement that do not contain a reference to noncompliance with the standard and the inclusion or exclusion of which is at the discretion of the institution of higher education. Proposals for further developments will not affect the final decision of the Council.

2. The annual quality assurance monitoring system is thoroughly planned and comprehensive, effective internal quality assurance procedures with regular feedback cycles are in place.
3. Strong commitment to democratic leadership and inclusive decision-making is part of the organisational culture.
4. Growing digital and strategic communication capacity.
5. The university aligns its personnel management system with both national and international best practices by implementing individual teaching and research plans for academic staff, that are evaluated annually.
6. Effective financial management with diversified income and no arrears on salaries or utilities.
7. Transparent budgeting with public reporting increases accountability.
8. Advanced, integrated information systems support academic and administrative functions.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. Several sub-strategies (Digitalisation strategy, Internationalisation strategy) could create fragmentations. More coherence between different plans is recommended with clear connection with key performance indicators.
2. A high teaching-related workload among academic staff, along with a relatively large proportion of part-time, contract-based staff, may lead to burnout and limit the time available for research. To maintain motivation and ensure a better balance between teaching and research, encourage more full-time contracts and deepen staff engagement in research and development.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. Strengthen the visibility and impact of internationalization and digitalization by expanding communication tools to reach global audiences and support collaboration through webinars, podcasts, and virtual events.
2. Develop a comprehensive external communication strategy for disseminating information about core academic, research, and civic activities across digital platforms (website, social media, YouTube and other channels, including the combination of student radio, cultural projects, and collaborations with schools could inspire a national framework for youth engagement in civic education).
3. It is recommended that the university initiate national level debates to reduce teaching hours for professors and other academics while upholding academic standards, such as offering incentives for publishing in international journals and implementing clear regulations for scientific work.
4. Further efforts should be made to expand access to international research grants, foster private partnerships, and collaborate with enterprises in high-tech fields like artificial intelligence and robotics to diversify funding and enhance research output.
5. Introduce more systematic incentives to encourage young professionals to take academic career (e.g. improve visibility and access to career pathways in academia for students through mentorship and research integration).

6. Enhance student training and support for better utilization of academic databases and digital resources to increase meaningful use of databases.
7. Expand international and non-governmental funding efforts to reduce reliance on state budgets.
8. Continue upgrading digital infrastructure to keep the pace with evolving educational technologies.

9.2. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Strengths

1. Clear and transparent admission conditions for all levels and all specialities.
2. English-language training for all level of education.
3. Quality control system for educational services and learning environment.
4. Developed university policies for designing and improving study programmes.
5. Stakeholders are involved in study programme development and monitoring which helps to assure that study programmes meet the expectations of employers and society.
6. Each study programme has a component of internship (industrial, research, training, etc.).
7. Student assessment methods are diverse.
8. NUOA has established a support system for students, e.g. a tutoring system.
9. Modern technical and educational technological resources are used.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. There is no system for taking previous work experience into account. Since there are students from various ages and experiences at the university there is a growing need to develop a system for considering previous work experience.
2. Excessive centralisation of the management of learning processes could be resolved by adding responsibility to all levels in the management of learning processes.
3. Student mobility could be increased by expanding the range of international partners in academic mobility.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. To attract international students by offering flexible educational pathways and using new learning technologies.
2. Improve the admission process with motivational interviews with students to prevent drop-out.
3. To introduce stakeholder councils for all study programmes. The activities of the employers' council will facilitate their active involvement in the educational process and the process of improving study programmes. This will allow for immediate response to changes in the labour market and, as a result, the training of highly qualified graduates.
4. Together with students, set up a system to motivate students to give feedback on learning activities.
5. Find ways to increase contact teaching and meetings with students to reduce drop-out.

9.3. RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND/OR OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITIES (RDC)

Strengths

1. NUOA has clearly defined strategic goals and operational objectives for research, aligned with its mission and regional development priorities.
2. The University demonstrates steady growth in scientific output, with publications number increasing from 263 to 379 annually between 2020 and 2024, research visibility is supported by substantial presence and citations in Google Scholar and Scopus database.
3. The University actively participates in national and international grant competitions, reflecting a commitment to broad research funding and collaboration.
4. External evaluations confirm NUOA's strong research performance, ranking it 24th out of 104 institutions in Social Sciences within Ukraine.
5. NUOA maintains a comprehensive and transparent RDC support system, integrating research obligations into faculty contracts and providing internal funding through the Ostroh Academy Grant.
6. The University operates 14 research centres and 11 laboratories across diverse disciplines, actively engaging students and fostering international collaboration.
7. NUOA secures diverse financial resources for research, combining internal funding with successful participation in competitive international grant programs such as Erasmus+ and the Visegrad Fund.
8. The University demonstrates strong international cooperation, evidenced by membership in multiple consortia and numerous research and academic agreements worldwide.
9. Modernized infrastructure and well-equipped laboratories, including the Robotics Laboratory, support interdisciplinary research and practical learning, with efficient utilization confirmed by the expert panel.
10. NUOA actively engages students across bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels in diverse research and creative activities, supported by structured supervision and project participation.
11. Supervisory workloads are carefully managed with limits on the number of doctoral candidates per supervisor, ensuring focused and quality mentorship.
12. The University maintains a strong academic integrity culture through clear policies and advanced plagiarism detection tools integrated into the learning platform.
13. Formal frameworks are in place to admit international doctoral students and support their mobility, aligned with international cooperation initiatives.
14. NUOA involves recognized foreign scientists in doctoral programs via international collaborations and partnerships, enhancing global academic exposure for students.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. The limited international visibility of research outputs can be addressed by developing targeted support programs to increase publications in high-impact, internationally recognized journals through academic writing and dissemination training.
2. The limited number of English-language research publications constrains the University's international visibility and funding opportunities, so it is recommended to increase the

share of publications in English-language, peer-reviewed journals to support internationalisation and broader RDC engagement.

3. Moderate doctoral student enrolment and limited internationalization can be improved by creating incentives and streamlined procedures to attract more domestic and international doctoral candidates.
4. Participation in national research funding programs remains limited; the University should increase its strategic engagement with state budget competitions and the National Research Fund of Ukraine to diversify and strengthen its financial support for RDC activities.
5. Students' underutilization of scientific databases limits the depth and quality of their research. This issue should be addressed by enhancing student engagement through mandatory training sessions integrated into research methodology courses, regular library-led workshops on platforms like Scopus and Google Scholar, and the inclusion of compulsory literature reviews based on academic databases in thesis and project requirements.
6. The predominance of single-author student publications may reduce collaborative learning opportunities, so encouraging joint publications with supervisors is recommended.
7. The relatively narrow scope of research groups could be expanded by merging smaller groups to foster broader student participation and interdisciplinary research. Also to help with the supervision workload and manage resources effectively.
8. Limited formal involvement of international supervisors constrains global academic exposure and can be improved by formalizing and increasing foreign expert participation in supervision and co-supervision.
9. High academic teaching loads on staff reduce time available for supervision and research, suggesting systemic and personalized approach to workload reduction by NUOA management.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. Expand interdisciplinary and collaborative research projects to address broader societal challenges and increase stakeholder engagement.
2. Intensify the applications to the state budget funding (young researchers, interdisciplinary research).
3. Strengthen mechanisms to better align research priorities with emerging regional and national development needs through regular stakeholder consultations.
4. Consolidate and strengthen research centres and laboratories to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and optimize the use of resources and to reduce fragmentation of research centres and laboratories.
5. Expand and diversify internal and external funding sources by increasing participation in national research competitions and international grant programs.
6. Further modernize and maintain research infrastructure to meet evolving scientific and technological demands.
7. Enhance support services for researchers, including grant writing assistance, intellectual property management, and research data services.

8. Consider the use of the approved professional standard for higher education teachers under the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine Order No. 1466 (dated October 16, 2024) for reduction and personalization of academic staff teaching load to enable more focused and effective PhD student supervision.

9.4. SERVICE TO SOCIETY

Strengths

1. Effective use of public forums (e.g. Diplomatic Forum) and media to popularise scientific and academic discourse.
2. Integration of civic engagement with academic programming through high-profile guest lectures and Science Days.
3. The use of a centralized institutional calendar to coordinate and promote university events demonstrates effective internal communication and outreach. This practice enhances visibility, fosters engagement across departments, and serves as a replicable model for other institutions.
4. Comprehensive teacher training programmes aligned with European standards and digital transformation goals.
5. Continuing education is strongly aligned with national priorities, particularly in the areas of post-conflict recovery and education reform, as evidenced by timely and relevant initiatives like the “One Nation” programme focused on social reintegration.
6. Use of digital and blended formats in Open University increases access to lifelong learning, including for rural and vulnerable populations.
7. Strong integration of the university into the socio-cultural life of Ostroh and the broader region.
8. Effective use of university infrastructure (museums, forums, shelters) for public benefit.
9. Resilient cultural programming during wartime that creatively repurposes institutional resources to benefit the public and strengthen community cohesion, e.g. cultural programming in shelters.

Areas of concern and recommendations

1. While the platform and activities towards society are robust, there is room for development in systemising of faculty’s external advisory roles and collaborations to better reflect institutional outreach. The panel recommends that the university develop a systematic database and tracking system for faculty involvement in social or external advisory roles and collaborations to enhance strategic outreach, visibility, and reporting. At the same time actively encourage academic staff to take on such roles and formally recognise this type of engagement by integrating it into staff workload planning and performance assessment frameworks.
2. There appears to be limited strategic engagement with local industries or employers to tailor short-term programmes for labour market needs. Strengthen partnerships with regional business associations and employment services to align continuing education offerings with workforce demands. Establish mechanisms for employers and other

stakeholder involvement in shaping continuing education programmes in a more agile and responsive manner.

3. The sustainability of volunteer and cultural programmes is not clearly supported by long-term funding strategies or institutional integration. Secure diversified funding (e.g., municipal co-financing, international grants) and embed public-oriented projects within academic or operational structures to ensure sustainability. Also, formal partnerships with NGOs or CSOs for shared delivery of public services might help. For that it might be useful to develop a memorandum of cooperation with relevant civil society organisations to co-create and expand outreach initiatives.

Opportunities for further improvement

1. It is not evident how public lectures, and civic events translate into longer-term results and collaborations or policy influence. It might be useful to develop a follow-up system to track policy or academic collaborations arising from public engagements and establish thematic continuity across events.
2. To understand the impact of the carried-out events, post-event surveys or community feedback mechanisms might also help to evaluate the impact and refine future engagement.
3. Continue offering continuing education programmes online and hybrid formats to reach underserved communities, particularly in eastern and southern Ukraine.
4. Continue increasing awareness and visibility of continuing education programmes, public lectures etc through strategic communications and stakeholder engagement. Enhance the visibility of these programmes by actively promoting them through digital platforms and other communication channels at the national level to have broader audiences and outreach. The School of Educational Innovations can be more introduced on national level as good practice, with its sector-specific, targeted upskilling (particularly for teachers), can be a model for scaling sectoral courses for professional development (CPD) across the country.
5. According to SER and the interview with the university senior management the university's digital platform for lifelong learning, though promising, is not widely referenced in terms of actual usage metrics or learner engagement outcomes. Regularly collect and publish data on platform usage, course completion rates, and learner satisfaction to optimize digital delivery and identify improvement areas.
6. Develop a unified feedback and impact-tracking system to evaluate the medium- and long-term effectiveness of continuing education. This would enable the university to assess the real-world outcomes of its lifelong learning initiatives, such as career advancement or skill application by learners. Such insights can inform curriculum improvement, demonstrate societal impact, and support strategic positioning in a competitive educational landscape.
7. Broaden access to Open University content by offering multilingual options, expanding international collaboration in continuing education, and adopting hybrid or fully online formats to enhance accessibility. This would not only increase the university's global reach and visibility but could also attract a more diverse learner base, opening new avenues for external funding, international partnerships, and revenue generation through

fee-based programs. Expanding accessibility aligns with broader institutional goals of inclusion, impact, and sustainability.

8. To have a more transparent and unified system for continuing education that is easily understandable for all interested parties, it would be useful in the future to bring The School of Innovations and Open University under one umbrella, instead of having two separate systems, have one centralised monitoring system, create a centralised digital portal for continuing education programmes, clearly specifying course offerings, schedules, target groups, and registration procedures.
9. Enhance visibility of public events, documentation and activities through media partnerships and open-access documentation. Also consider, multilingual visibility and documentation of public-oriented activities to promote replicability and strengthen international reputation. It might be useful to increase outreach to different target groups through targeted access strategies (e.g., people with disabilities, elderly, internally displaced persons).
10. While there is a notable variety of public initiatives, the evaluation of these activities' long-term societal impact remains limited. To address this, an impact monitoring system to assess community outcomes and ensure alignment with university development goals and public needs could be developed. Regular reporting on community impact — such as participant numbers, demographics, and follow-up activities — could also be implemented.
11. Expand thematic diversity in cultural programming to include global and regional sustainability challenges. Consider developing community advisory boards or focus groups to co-design future public programmes. These bodies can serve as structured platforms for dialogue with local stakeholders, ensuring that programming reflects community interests and priorities, enhances relevance and inclusivity, and fosters stronger university-community partnerships.
12. The geographic remoteness of the university may limit broader regional engagement. Increase digital outreach and forge stronger partnerships with other regional educational and cultural institutions to broaden impact.

10. If all component assessments are provided as 'conforms with requirements', the Quality Assessment Council shall conclude that the management, administration, academic and research activity, and academic and research environment, meet the requirements; and decide to accredit the institution of higher education for seven years.

11. Considering the above, the Council

DECIDED TO:

Accredit the National University of Ostroh Academy for seven years.

The decision was adopted with 10 votes in favour and 0 against.

The Council considers it necessary to emphasize that the areas of concern identified under the RDC and Service to society assessment areas require serious attention to ensure the sustainable development of the university.

12. Accreditation is valid until 29.08.2032.

13. A person who considers that his or her rights or freedoms have been infringed by the decision, can lodge a challenge with HAKA's Assessment Council within 30 days of the date on which the objector became aware or should have become aware of the contested act. The Council shall forward the challenge to HAKA's Appeals Committee who shall provide an unbiased opinion in writing regarding the validity of the challenge to the Council, within five days after receipt of the challenge. The Council shall resolve the appeal within 10 days of its receipt, taking into account the reasoned opinion of the Appeals Committee. If further examination of the challenge is necessary, the Assessment Council may extend the deadline for examining the challenge by up to 30 days. Judicial contestation of a decision is possible within 30 days from the date of service of the judgment by filing an appeal with the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

Hillar Bauman

Secretary of the Council