

**Commissioned Review of the Police  
Science Programme at the  
University of Akureyri**

**- Summary -**

March 2021



## Preface

This is the report of a commissioned special review of the Police Science programme at the University of Akureyri undertaken at the behest of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and executed by the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education.

Special reviews are designed and executed by the Quality Board in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations. In executing these reviews, the Board maintains full independence in all phases of the review, from the selection and appointment of the experts to the responsibility for the final review report. The work is carried out based on Terms of Reference that are congruent with the Quality Board's "Principles and Values"<sup>1</sup> and emphasise an improvement-orientated and fitness-for-purpose approach. The expert team works on the basis of evaluation guidelines that are anchored in this philosophy.

Further information on the activities of the Quality Board is available on the website of the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework ([www.qef.is](http://www.qef.is)).

Dr Andrée Sursock

Chair

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<sup>1</sup> <https://qef.is/about-us/principles-and-values/>

## Review Team

The following experts comprised the Team:

Prof. Dr. Jelle Janssens, Chair. Associate Professor, Ghent University, Department of Criminology, Criminal Law and Social Law, Belgium.

Dr Kimmo Himberg. Director and Rector of Police University College, Tampere, Finland.

Kolbrún Lára Kjartansdóttir, student. University of Iceland.

Ms Fiona Crozier, Panel Secretary. Independent consultant. Former Head of International, Quality Assurance Agency, UK.

## 1. About the Review

This special review was conducted based on agreed terms of reference (Annex 2) and on guidelines to the expert team that were developed for this specific review. The review was required by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture as part of the renewal process for the contract between it and the University of Akureyri (UNAK) for providing basic Police education in Iceland. UNAK offers two 2-year 120 ECTS Diploma Programmes in Police Science, with one being open to working law enforcement officers ('starfandi lögreglumenn') and the other being open to prospective students who do not have this experience ('verðandi lögreglumenn'). Students who graduate from the Diploma Programmes can apply to a 1-year 'top-up' programme that culminates in a 180 ECTS BA degree.

The review process was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and began in autumn 2020.

Members of the review panel were provided with the University's Reflective Analysis (RA) and associated evidence at the end of September 2020. Additional information was requested by the review panel on 8 October 2020 and received on 23 October 2020. The virtual site visit was held from 2nd-6th November 2020 and involved meetings with 24 groups of internal and external stakeholders including students (see Annex 1).

## 2. Summary of Review Results

### 2.1. General summary

The themes of communication and integration encompass almost all of the key points that the review team made. The review team recognises the continuous work by the programme's staff and administrators to improve the programme, not only content-wise but also procedurally. However, the lack of a signed agreement between UNAK and the Centre for Police Training and Professional Development (PTPD), as specified in the contract with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the lack of an agreed national profile for an Icelandic police officer, the lack of UNAK

oversight of internship assessment, the many issues around integration and synchronicity between UNAK and PTPD and, despite recognition of many of the problems, the lack of any clear action plan(s) convinced the team that the initial rushed planning and implementation of the programme was still too much in evidence after five years.

The review team noted a lack of coherence in terms of communication of the programme via the UNAK and PTPD websites and communication issues also included the lack of comprehensive communication channels to allow for discussion of, and agreement on, the profile of an Icelandic police officer.

The review team believes that, despite its modest resources, the Police Sciences Programme at UNAK has a competent teaching staff and an inclusive student body. The inherent problems in the programme described in this report are more likely to impact directly on its operation than is a lack of funding.

The review team believes that, with the right support and opportunity for reflection and action planning, the programme in Police Science can overcome its current problems. It hopes that the recommendations made in this report will assist UNAK and PTPD staff at programme and institutional level to consider them under the thematic headings of integration and communication. The team hopes that the recommendations can be prioritised and actioned with a view to stabilising and embedding the Police Science programme as a valuable and respected qualification in Icelandic society.

## 2.2. Summary of strengths

The strengths identified by the review team include:

- The integration of police training in the higher education system and the resulting focus of the programme in aiming to change and modernise the Icelandic police force

- The location of the programme in the School of Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences which allows students to participate in a range of relevant courses
- The potential of the Police Education Advisory Board (PEAB) as a vehicle for ongoing monitoring and revision of the programme to ensure that it remains relevant to all stakeholders
- The effort made by programme and faculty staff in UNAK and the Centre for Police Training and Professional Development (PTPD) to improve the programme since its initial, hasty inception and the increased cooperation with PTPD at programme level, including regular, weekly meetings
- The inclusive nature of the distance learning aspects of the programme in allowing those students who would not otherwise be able to enrol access to the programme
- The well-functioning ICT platform and digital library resources
- The willingness of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to provide feedback and support on individual courses
- The level of accessible, on-line information about the programme on the UNAK website

### 2.3 Summary of areas for improvement

Areas of improvement include:

- The resourcing of the programme should be considered by both the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the Ministry of Justice, as well as UNAK
- There should be more transparency at institutional level about the allocation of the financing for the programme
- A formal agreement between UNAK and PTPD should be drafted and signed as soon as possible in order to clarify roles and expectations. Such an agreement is required by the contract between Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and UNAK

- Structural cooperation is hampered by a complex environment of two ministries and two institutions: clear structures that enable communication and decision-making between ministries, between institutions and between ministry(ies) and institution(s) should be developed
- There should be more integration of the programme in terms of its synchronisation of aims, workload and academic and professional training and learning outcomes; this should be communicated through the formal agreement between UNAK and PTPD and should be communicated to students
- A clear communication strategy should be developed at institutional level to ensure that communication between support services and students is effective to ensure that students are aware of the services and that the services are able to provide accurate information
- There should be discussion between all relevant stakeholders, including the National Police Commissioner for Iceland, of the profile of an Icelandic police officer, including an integrated set of knowledge and skills. This could lead to reconsideration of the credit system
- Although there is value in the Distance Learning element of the programme, nonetheless the programme team should ensure that, from a pedagogic perspective, it is the best approach. This should include consideration of the effectiveness of the '*lota*'
- The internship is being increased from 200 to 280 hours. This is an improvement but should be monitored closely to ensure that it is sufficient to allow students to achieve its goals
- The University should increase its oversight of the training of police educational supervisors and of the assessment of the internship which is currently carried out by those supervisors
- The University should disseminate its policy for recognition of prior learning

- The University should further develop its assessment feedback/response system between teaching staff and students
- There should be an institutional HR policy that enables staff to undertake regular appraisal processes that are not solely in relation to student evaluations. The process should be a supportive one that seeks to clarify development needs and allow staff to set personal goals
- The University quality management system does not support the programme team. The need for space to reflect on the programme, its mission, goals, objectives, content and structure should be provided outside of the requirements of the curriculum committee. A regular (annual?) monitoring process should be developed on the lines of Plan-Do-Check-Act to provide both the programme and the institution with a more enhancement-focused oversight of the programme
- The University quality management system should provide the programme team with a solid process to effectively utilize student feedback for improvements and to close the loop by providing responses to that feedback to increase constructive communication between teaching staff and students
- The University's quality management system should incorporate PTPD to further assist with integration

#### 2.4. Judgment on managing standards

The review team concludes that limited confidence can be placed in the soundness of UNAK's present and likely future arrangements to secure the academic standards of its award of Diploma in Police Science.

## 2.5. Judgment on managing quality of student learning experience

The review team concludes that limited confidence can be placed in the soundness of UNAK's present and likely future arrangements to manage the student learning experience in respect of its award of Diploma in Police Science.

## 2.6. The view of the review team on the fulfilment of the contract with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

In addition to the judgements on academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience, part of the panel's task was to evaluate to what extent UNAK was fulfilling the conditions of its contract with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in respect of the programme in Police Science.

In the view of the review team, it is difficult to make any kind of overarching judgement as to whether or not these five aspects of the contract have been fulfilled. The lack of a signed agreement between UNAK and PTPD (although not one of the five aspects under scrutiny) is a clear example of something that has not been actioned and it was difficult for the team to understand why it had not been.

In relation to the other aspects:

- Admissions criteria: the contract is fulfilled, but, it seems, at a cost to students.
- Content and quality of the programme: at a basic level, the contract is fulfilled but there are many aspects that could be improved that would lead to the enhancement of the programme and the quality of the student experience.
- General and professional competence criteria: again, the contract is fulfilled but there are aspects that could be improved that would lead to the enhancement of the programme and student achievement.

- Organisation of the diploma programme in Police Science, including vocational training and practical exercises: it is doubtful as to whether or not the contract is completely fulfilled.
- Quality assurance: the contract is partially fulfilled.

It is the opinion of the review panel that, whilst there is much that UNAK could do in partnership with PTPD to ensure complete fulfilment of the contract, it would be unfair to ignore the circumstances under which the programme was developed and implemented, since these continue to affect the delivery of the programme. In relation to the contract itself, one of the key difficulties faced by the programme is the need to serve various masters: two ministries, two institutions, the National Commission for Police in Iceland, students and so on. Whilst there is much that UNAK could do to improve this situation (detailed in this report under the two key themes of communication and integration), the programme would benefit from support in doing so both from the University itself and from the main external stakeholders.

## Annex 1: Meeting Schedule

### Monday November 2

Time	Meeting	Attendees
8:30-9:15	<b>Meeting with the Rector of UNAK</b>	Eyjólfur Guðmundsson, Rector
9:20-10:00	<b>Quality Manager and other QM staff at institutional level</b>	Sigrún Lóa Kristjánsdóttir, Project Manager, Key Figures Sigrún Magnúsdóttir, Quality Specialist Vaka Óttarsdóttir, Director of Quality and HRM
10:30-11:00	<b>Police Student Union</b>	Not disclosed. N = 4
11:00-11:30	<b>Open meeting: students</b>	Not disclosed. N = 7
12.30-14:00	<b>UNAK institutional management team - including Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and Head of the Faculty of Social Sciences</b>	Elín Díanna Gunnarsdóttir, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences Heiða Kristín Jónsdóttir, School office manager Hólmar Erlu Svansson, CEO Vaka Óttarsdóttir, Director of Quality and HRM Þóroddur Bjarnason, Head of Faculty, Social Sciences

### Tuesday November 3

Time	Meeting	
8:30-9:15	<b>Ministry of Education, Science and Culture</b>	Not disclosed. N = 3
9:15-10:00	<b>Recently graduated students</b>	Not disclosed. N = 4
10:30-12:00	<b>The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development</b>	Guðmundur Ásgeirsson, staff Hildur Þuríður Rúnarsdóttir, staff Logi Jes Kristjánsson, staff Ólafur Örn Bragason, Director Sverrir Guðfinnsson, staff
13:00-13:40	<b>Capital Region Police Authority</b>	Not disclosed. N = 4
13:50-14:30	<b>North-East Police Authority</b>	Not disclosed. N = 2

**Wednesday November 4**

Time	Meeting	
8:30-9:15	<b>Ministry of Justice</b>	Not disclosed. N = 2
9:20-10:00	<b>Academic Support Services, Head of Centre for Teaching and Learning,</b>	Auðbjörg Björnsdóttir, Head of Centre for Teaching and Learning Katrín Árnadóttir, Head of Marketing and Public Relations Ólina Freysteinsdóttir, Student Counselling Services Pia Susanna Sigurlína Viinikka, library
10:30-11:30	<b>Full-time academic staff from PS and Head of Centre for Teaching and Learning</b>	Andrew Paul Hill, Programme Director, Police Science Auðbjörg Björnsdóttir, Head of Centre for Teaching and Learning Eyrún Eyþórsdóttir, Lector, Police Science Guðmundur Oddsson, Docent, Police Science Hrannar Már Hafberg, Lector, Law Margrét Valdimarsdóttir, Lector, Police Science
12.30-13:10	<b>Sessional teaching staff in PS</b>	Birgir Jónasson, Police Eiríkur Valberg, Police Hildur Fjóla Antonsdóttir, Doctoral Student, Lund University María Bjarnadottir, Doctoral Student, University of Sussex
13:20-14:00	<b>National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police</b>	Not disclosed. N = 3

**Thursday November 5**

Time	Meeting	
8:30-09:15	<b>1st year students in PS</b>	Not disclosed. N = 3
9:20-10:00	<b>2nd year students in PS</b>	Not disclosed. N = 3
10:30-11:30	<b>Open meeting: Faculty</b>	Not disclosed. N = 24
12.30-14:00	<b>Programme Steering Committee for Police Science, including UNAK Programme Director/Project Manager</b>	Andrew Paul Hill, Programme Director, Police Science Eyrún Eyþórsdóttir, Lector, Police Science Guðmundur Ásgeirsson, Centre for Police Training and Professional Development Hildur Sólveig Elvarsdóttir, Project manager Margrét Valdimarsdóttir, Lector, Police Science Ólafur Örn Bragason, Director of Centre for Police Training and Professional Development NN, Student Representative

**Friday November 6**

Time	Meeting	
8:30-10:00	<b>PEAB</b>	Árni Pétur Veigarsson Ásgeir Þór Ásgeirsson Elín Jóhannsdóttir, South-Region Police District Guðmundir Fylkisson, Police Officer Union Ingibjörg Ýr Jóhannsdóttir Kristján Kristjánsson Pétur Björnsson, North-East Police District Commissioner Rannveig B Sverrisdóttir, South-Region Police District
11:10-11:40	<b>Rector and National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police</b>	Eyjólfur Guðmundsson, Rector Sigríður Björk Guðjónsdóttir, National Chief of Police
12.30-14:00	<b>Follow-up with Full-time academic staff from PS</b>	Andrew Paul Hill, Programme Director, Police Science Eyrún Eyþórsdóttir, Lector, Police Science Guðmundur Oddsson, Docent, Police Science Hildur Sóloveig Elvarsdóttir, Project Manager Hrannar Már Hafberg, Lector, Law Margrét Valdimarsdóttir, Lector, Police Science
14:00-14:30	<b>Finance manager</b>	Harpa Halldórsdóttir, UNAK Director of Finance
14:30-15:00	<b>Rector and QM</b>	Eyjólfur Guðmundsson, Rector Vaka Óttarsdóttir, Director of Quality and HRM

## Annex 2: Review terms of Reference

### I. Scope of the review

Following a request by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (MESC), and in agreement with the University of Akureyri (UNAK), the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education will organise the review of Police Science at UNAK.

The focus of the review will be on a two-year police education programme that has been located in UNAK at MESC's request. A Bachelor's degree in Police Education was set up subsequently by the university and will be part of this review.

### II. Methodology of the review

The general approach of this review will respect the philosophy of the Quality Enhancement Framework, as spelled out in the in the 2017 version of the *Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education*<sup>2</sup> (hereinafter, the '*QEF2 Handbook*').

The review will be based on a Reflective Analysis, conducted by UNAK's Faculty of Social Sciences, which takes into account the contract signed between MESC and UNAK in October 2016 and discusses the following aspects:

- The learning journey of students and how standards of award are ensured.
- The effectiveness of student support services that directly impact the quality of the student learning experience (this can include, for example, library, laboratory, career guidance, counselling, information technology services).
- The link between teaching and research/scholarship (see § 33 of the *QEF2 Handbook*).
- The national and international collaborative relationships in delivering the education and training of students and how the institution guarantees the standards of award in this context.
- If there is research activity linked to the subject, how the institution manages this area (see § 49 of the *QEF2 Handbook*).
- How quality assurance and enhancement processes meet the expectations of the ESG.
- An analysis of student progression, graduation and employment or further study.

As specified the *QEF2 Handbook*:

The Reflective Analysis should be the outcome of open reflection by the institutional community, staff and students. The document should include a clear description of the process leading to the completion of the Reflective Analysis. In particular, it should include a commentary from the Chair of the Student Council (or equivalent) on the involvement of students in the development of the Reflective Analysis (§ 69).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://en.rannis.is/media/gaedarad/Final-for-publication-14-3-2017.pdf>. Since then the Handbook can be found at: <https://qef.is/assets/PDFs/Others/QEF2-Handbook-for-website.pdf>

The Reflective Analysis should be accompanied by the main sources of evidence on which it is based (key statistics, committee minutes, etc.) and other documents readily available which will assist the Review Team in understanding the processes and structures of the institution. Quality Handbooks (describing the internal quality systems and structure), prospectuses, student handbooks, guides for postgraduate students etc are all welcome (§ 71).

All documentation relevant to the IWR should be made available to the team in electronic format, by the most convenient means: e.g. via hyperlinks in the Reflective Analysis, or by granting access to the institution's intranet, or by collecting them on a USB, or by some combination of the foregoing. Whichever means are adopted, there needs to be clear linkages between the Reflective Analysis and the related evidence base. In addition, each member of the Review Team should be provided, via the Board Manager in advance of the visit, with a bound, paper copy of the Reflective Analysis provided by the institution. Paper copies of any documents that the institution itself publishes in that format (such as a Prospectus) should be available to the Review Team during the site visit (§ 72).

The Board manager will provide support to the Reflective Analysis as specified in the *QEF2 Handbook*:

In advance of each IWR, the Board secretariat will contact the institution to provide guidance and support on the preparation and submission of the Reflective Analysis. Key dates for the submission of material will be agreed at that stage (§ 73).

Such advice, however, would be limited to the general structure, approach and style of the document. The Board Manager is not in a position to offer any detailed comments on content (§ 74).

Following the submission of the Reflective Analysis (which is due a month before the scheduled site visit), team members might request further information from the institution. If "significant problems are identified with the Reflective Analysis, the institution would be asked to revise its submission" (§ 74 of the *Handbook*).

A visit by a team of experts will be organised by the Quality Board. The programme of the visit will be agreed in advance with the institution. The principles for organising the visit are spelled out in § 76-85 of the *QEF2 Handbook*.

The team will interview the UNAK senior leadership, students, teaching and administrative staff as well as any other partners and stakeholders who are external to the university and whose views are deemed important for gaining a good understanding of the programme.

### **III. Outcomes of the study**

The review will result in a report that will be delivered to UNAK after the University will have the opportunity to correct any factual errors. In producing the review report, the team will follow the guidelines spelled out in the *Handbook*, § 86-87.

The report will include commentary on good practice and recommendations for enhancement and conclude with confidence judgments on a) standards of degrees and awards and b) student learning

experience. The confidence judgments will be formulated by the Quality Board following the principles spelled out in the *QEF2 Handbook*, § 93-98.

UNAK will have the possibility to lodge a complaint or an appeal, as specified in § 90 of the *QEF2 Handbook*.

UNAK will share the review report with MESC as part of its original contractual agreement to offer this education programme and to have it reviewed.

The Quality Board will consider that this exercise exempts UNAK from conducting a SLR for this unit, in the current round, provided the following process is followed:

- a) The Quality Board will provide a summary of this review and post it on its website. It will also be included as an annex in the full report (*QEF2 Handbook*, § 53).
- b) If the report concludes with positive confidence judgments, the report will be considered along with the other SLR reports as part of the Institution-Wide Review of the University; as such, UNAK will provide information on how they have dealt with the recommendations provided in this and other SLR reports.
- c) If, however, the unit receives a limited or no confidence judgment, then UNAK will be asked to produce an Action Plan that will address how the weaknesses identified will be remedied. This procedure is described in the *QEF2 Handbook*, § 102, as follows:

The Action Plan should be submitted to the Board Manager within two months of receipt of the final report. The Quality Board, normally in consultation with both the Review Chair and the institution, will make a judgement on the potential adequacy of the Action Plan to address the identified weaknesses. In the event of a Plan being deemed inadequate, a representative of the Quality Board (together with the Board Manager) will meet with the Rector or senior representative of the institution to agree a speedy resolution. In the unlikely event of a failure to agree an Action Plan, the Board will report to MESC that it is unable to fulfil its obligations in this particular context and take instruction from MESC.

#### **IV. Human resources and timing**

- The Review Team will consist of four members: three international experts and an Icelandic student. One of the international experts will serve as Chair, and another one as Secretary. The team will be assembled with a view of providing the following combination of experience:
  - Knowledge of the subject area.
  - Senior experience in higher education, particularly in managing quality and standards.
  - Evaluation experience.
- The student member will be nominated by LÍS. It should normally be a current student registered on an undergraduate or postgraduate course in Iceland and have no conflict of interest with the institution or the subject. Prospective reviewers will be required to certify that they have no conflict of interest with the institution being reviewed. UNAK will be asked to comment on the proposed membership of the team in relation to any potential conflict of interest.

- The Board Manager will provide coordination and support during all phases of this exercise.
- The Quality Board will train the team (face-to-face and online, plus access to all relevant Quality Board documents, such as the *Guidelines for Team Chairs and Team Members*) and supervise this review. The Board will take responsibility for the final confidence judgments and the liaison with UNAK and MESC.