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**Abstract**

This article seeks to establish what impact external quality assessment had on universities in Estonia between 1997 and 2009. It is based on a study of the analysis of experts' reports of curricula accreditation and interviews with university and programme managers, undertaken between 2007 and 2009. The study included an analysis of 12 curricula in 3 public universities. According to the findings the general impact was evaluated as comparatively low. It was stronger in relation to the curriculum, study process and academic reputation of a teaching unit, but in several other significant aspects, such as university management, quality assurance and funding, there was little influence reported. The research findings suggest a number of possible developments for further design modifications for a quality assessment system in Estonia, as well as in other countries using similar assessment models. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)