

100% TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED ADMISSION IN TALLINN HEALTH CARE COLLEGE: APPLICANTS' FEEDBACK

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Annotation

There is a broad agreement that health care and medical school admission procedure should meet several criteria, e.g. objectivity, reliability, validity, and effectiveness as the most important characteristics that entrance exams should have. The 2020 admission process was different from all the previous years' and we expected that health care students applicants may have difficulties with web-based interviews and tests, especially in the case of vocational students who have less experience with web-based technology. The online questionnaire study was conducted to investigate the applicants' level of satisfaction with the admission process provided by College.

As the result of the current study the clear standards for online admission procedure have been developed in Tallinn Health Care College to modernize the online admission process and make it more credible and transparent for applicants. The study aims to summarize and draw appropriate conclusions and recommendations not only in X College but also in health care education institutions worldwide based on the study¹.

Key words: Health Care Education, Admission Process, Interview, Admission Test, Applicants, Feedback, Satisfaction.

Introduction

To improve health care for individuals and the whole population, health care professionals will be required to become members of the team-based patient care models necessary to achieve these goals. The first documented report which included an assessment of how medical school admission practices have changed across the decades was written by an American educator Abraham Flexner, who was best known for his contribution to the 20th-century reform of medical and higher education in the United States and Canada. Flexner pointed out that the country needs better medical professionals, and that the way to get them is to produce fewer. Flexner argued that future medical professionals should have at least knowledge of basic school natural sciences. Flexner was also in favour of linking study to practice in order to further develop medical schools by providing a learning experience in a patient care environment¹.

Several factors influence medical and health care school admissions. The definition of a qualification profile and the fairness of the examination are considered very important. In addition to cognitive skills and learning abilities, non-cognitive characteristics are crucial indicators for successful work in healthcare. The selection of future health professionals cannot be based solely on the results of high school final exams or on the average grade. As a predictor of the potential success of a future student in medical school, the evaluation of applicants also outside their average scores is very important. Therefore, in addition to the admission test which evaluates student candidate cognitive skills, there will also be admission interviews, which are also called mini-interviews. These are face-to-face interviews to help the Admissions Committee get to know the student candidate as a person and not just as a student, and evaluate their non-cognitive skills and readiness to work with individuals who need the help of the health care system. The interview is a kind of screening tool to help evaluate medical and health care school applicants.

The admissions process of Tallinn Health Care College is regulated by the College Admission Regulation, approved by the Council of the College Decision No 2.1 of September 16, 2014. The admission process is based on three pillars - the average grade of a high school diploma, a written test plus exams in some specialities, and finally, an interview. Thus, both

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cognitive and personal characteristics, so-called non-cognitive skills, which are necessary for every healthcare professional, are assessed. The first step is the submission of application and documents electronically in the Admission Information System www.sais.ee or if necessary, on location at the College, followed by conducting an admission test (technology-mediated), admission interview and practical admission tests in some disciplines (e.g. for dental technology, pharmacy and optometry curriculums). The candidate will receive a deadline by which to complete the admission test and the dates and times of the admission interview and practical tests after confirmation of the application. It is important to find out during the entrance interview the existence of professional motivation, readiness for studies, knowledge of the profession, ethical attitudes, expression skills in Estonian and general communication skills and readiness for studies are examined.

When evaluating candidates for master's studies, the candidate's weighted average grade on the academic transcript of applied higher education is taken into account (diploma supplement). Candidates must also submit a conceptual design of the development project, which must include problem handling, use of information, project vision, mission and main activities, willingness to cooperate, self-reflection. The admission interview assesses study motivation, analytical skills, readiness to lead professional or speciality development work, and their readiness for studies.

Tallinn Health Care College started conducting feedback surveys of college admissions in 2006. The survey is conducted twice a year - immediately after the summer admission tests in July-August and after the winter admission tests in January.

Summer 2020 differed from previous years in that the entire admission process was web-based - from the receipt of documents in the learning information system to the admission test, tests and interview.

The structure of the admission feedback survey has changed a lot over the years. This research measured whether applicants were satisfied with the admission order or not, how the organization of admission was built up, and how admission tests and interviews were organized and conducted. Thanks to the survey, the College has the opportunity to improve its work related with admission process even better in the future. For this purpose the following research questions were raised:

1. How new conditions changed admissions' attitudes towards the different steps of the admission process and the process as a whole?
2. How the satisfaction level of candidates was reflected by the web-based only admission process?
3. What can the Tallinn Health Care College do to make the admission process smoother, more comprehensible and more transparent in the future?

The admissions process to medical and health care educational institutions has been studied to great length around the world. The interview process has been thoroughly researched. Unfortunately, the author of this article did not find any surveys on candidate feedback and satisfaction with respective admission processes. Therefore the results of a current research can give an overview of the extent to which the admission process in Tallinn Health Care College meets applicants expectations.

Literature Review

A qualification profile of future health care student should cover all the competencies necessary for successful study and, especially in the case of medicine, for the successful attainment of the workforce (as far as these competencies are not trained in the curriculum). All these competencies should be assessed at the entrance examination² (Spiel & Schober, 2018, 61). Discussions on what kind should be "good medical/health professional" has tried to define the core future medical graduates should to become qualified and caring professionals³. In addition to academic success, there is a continued debate about what personal competencies are important for students entering medical school, and what reliable and valid methods should be used in entrance examinations to select students with the greatest potential to become an efficient, professional and caring healthcare professional in the future^{4,1}. The personal characteristics required for admission to health and medical schools are less clear as well as the methods for evaluating their properties suitable for involvement in the selection process. Important characteristics such as coping with stress, motivation and approach to learning are the qualities that seem to be partly predictive of the academic and professional performance of the prospective student³.

People, and their skills and competencies, are the greatest assets of any country. Broadly speaking, skills can be shared for two. Cognitive skills are based on mental ability or intelligence, but like other skills, you can also develop them through learning. Cognitive skills can also be called information-processing skills: these are skills allow one to read, understand, relate different information to existing knowledge. The principal cognitive skills are functional

reading skills, mathematical literacy, and problem-solving skills. Cognitive skills are usually assessed by level papers or final exams in a specific subject⁵. Non-cognitive skills can be largely associated with personal characteristics. Non-cognitive skills, also called professional skills, usually also includes social and emotional skills, perseverance, entrepreneurship, self-efficacy, self-control, self-management, and empathy. The success of healthcare professionals at the moment depends on the ability to work together between and across interdisciplinary healthcare groups effectively and the acquisition of these skills⁶.

The transition to health promotion and the prevention of health problems requires medical and healthcare professionals to meet the different health needs of communities. Medical and healthcare schools have developed comprehensive admissions procedures to be more inclusive in evaluating candidates⁷. Curricula for health professionals face increasing pressure on graduates to succeed in the workplace while meeting the demands of health systems, express a significant degree of motivation (goal-oriented, self-directed), critical thinking (problem solver), emotional intelligence, work-life balance, while meeting core competencies such as communication, collaboration, and ongoing professional development⁸. Among the non-traditional criteria, ethics and reliability, as well as good judgment, was also important as "situational" or "clinical" awareness⁹. The training of such professionals begins with an admissions process where both cognitive and non-cognitive skills and abilities can be screened to identify those with high potential for success⁸. It is important to work to avoid future dropouts during the admissions process, which may result from students' incomplete understanding of the rigour of health care curricula, long clinical hours and stringent requirements in the internship environment⁷.

When applying to medical or health professional programs, the admission interview is considered to be one of the most important, and usually the last, step in the complicated process. Admissions committees also face a significant challenge when planning and managing hundreds of interviews each year, while ensuring that each interviewee is adequately and fairly evaluated. Once the interview is over, the admissions committees may begin to decide which candidates will accept (or not) with the common goal of matriculating those candidates who are the most successful¹⁰. There have been many studies and much research on how the medical and health profession school admission process should adapt to identify individuals with good non-cognitive skills and who will be well suited for collaborative, team-based practice e.g., these studies focus on the interview step of the admission process and emphasize that the interview is the most important part of this process because it provides important information on the suitability and readiness of applicants to study at a school and become good health professional. Almost without exception, all health education schools use interviews with applicants to assess personal characteristics. The characteristics assessed in the typical admissions interview include questions about applicants' motivation for medical careers, compassion and empathy, personal maturity, oral communication, service orientation, and professionalism¹¹.

However, most schools utilize interviews in their admissions process to assess non-cognitive components using a personal interview or multiple mini-interviews methods (MMI)⁹. Studies examining admission criteria for nursing, medicine, dentistry, and pharmaceutical students have shown that academic measures are not the only ones that can predict students' success after acceptance into these programs^{12,9}. Many study results show that interpersonal skills assessed by the interview were inversely correlated with the last years of the program, where more emphasis has been placed on clinical interactions with patients¹³.

Admissions processes during the COVID-19 have not widely studied yet. Only one research report gives information about a technology-based application and suggests that applicants had a generally positive or neutral experience with procedural aspects of the Standardized Video Interview but generally had negative reactions to the interview itself. Applicants also had more negative reactions to highly structured interview and felt that in-person-interview would have "better reflected their proficiency in interpersonal and communication skills and knowledge of professional behaviour."¹⁴. However, technology is increasingly being integrated into health and medical school admissions processes. Moreover, as the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly changes the landscape of medical and health professional education, technology will likely be increasingly used in the admission processes of these schools¹⁵. It can only be hypothesized that interviews, which, even in the previous years, when they were conducted in-person and face-to-face format, raised questions about their objectivity, validity and credibility, have not brought credibility to the web-based technology-mediated format, but rather diminished it.

Characteristics of respondents

The vocational students' admissions survey took place in the period 10.08.2020 - 14.08.2020. A total of 322 candidates were sent a survey. The questionnaire could be answered

online in Estonian and Russian. In the period 12.08, the candidates could also answer the survey on the spot in the Tallinn study building (this opportunity was used 9 times in total). On 11.08-12.02, the candidates had the opportunity to answer the survey on-site in the Kohtla-Järve unit building (this opportunity has been used a total of 40 times). A total of 117 candidates for vocational training responded to the questionnaire, of which 115 were women and 2 men. 46 respondents applied for the Kohtla-Järve study group and 71 for the Tallinn study group.

The applied higher education students admissions survey was conducted in the period 8.07.2020 - 17.07.2020. A total of 1347 candidates were sent a survey. The survey was answered online in Estonian (382 respondents), English (3 respondents) and Russian (173 respondents). In the period 13.07-14.07, participants in the entrance examinations for the dental technician curriculum also had the opportunity to answer on paper (this opportunity was used twice). A total of 558 student candidates admitted to the admission exams responded to the applied higher education feedback survey. 511 of the respondents were female and 47 were male.

The survey of candidates for master's studies was conducted in the period 8.07.2020 - 17.07.2020. A total of 104 candidates were sent a questionnaire. The survey could be answered online in Estonian. A total of 60 people responded to the survey, including 55 female and 5 male student candidates.

The majority (62%) of those applying vocational education indicated Russian as their daily language of communication. The daily language of communication for candidates for higher education is predominantly Estonian (56.9%), followed by Russian (41%). There were significantly fewer speakers of other languages on a daily basis. All candidates for master's studies filled the questionnaires in Estonian. At the same time, 27% of them stated Russian as their home language.

The majority of those applied for vocational education were in the age groups 41-45 (24%) and 51-60 (20%), followed by the age groups 18-20 (14%) and 31-35 (13%). More than half (52%) of the candidates in higher education who responded to the survey belonged to the age group 18-20, other age groups were already relatively modestly represented. The age groups 21-25 (12%) and 31-35 (10%) can also be mentioned. The respondents who applied for master's studies were the most in the age groups 31-35 (22%), 41-45 (22%) and 26-30% (18%), but the age representation of the candidates was limited to the age groups 21-25 and 51-60.

The previous field of activity of candidates for vocational education was already closely related to health and social work (36%). Fewer candidates came from the service (18%) and education sector (9%). 11% of respondents were not working at the time of admission. Candidates for higher education come mainly from the service sector (33%), but also the health and social work sector (18%). 11% of respondents did not work before the entrance exams. 97% of candidates for master's studies in health sciences come from the field of health care and social work.

Admissions process

The four most important factors that encourage candidates to choose a College were a suitable profession, the opportunity to find a job in this field, a large share of internships, proximity to home, modern study conditions and an international diploma.

Respondents received initial information about the College through the College's website and from friends and acquaintances, as well as from their working place. The fact that the workplace is an important information source for candidates confirms the previously acknowledged fact that many of those applying for College already work in the field of health and social work.

The College does not need a lot of promotion. COVID-19 made it clear that health care professionals are really needed - in addition to doctors, the focus was on nurses and care workers, but also pharmacists and others. When we asked what specialities (including other vocational, higher and university institutions) entrants were still considering, it turned out that this time the candidates of Tallinn Health Care College had thoroughly considered the matter and almost all options were related to health care and/or medicine - 50% of vocational education candidates, 38% of higher education candidates and 30% of master's degree respondents did not consider any other speciality or higher education institution.

Student candidates took the admission exams with all seriousness and showed a highly responsible attitude for admission tests (Figure 1).

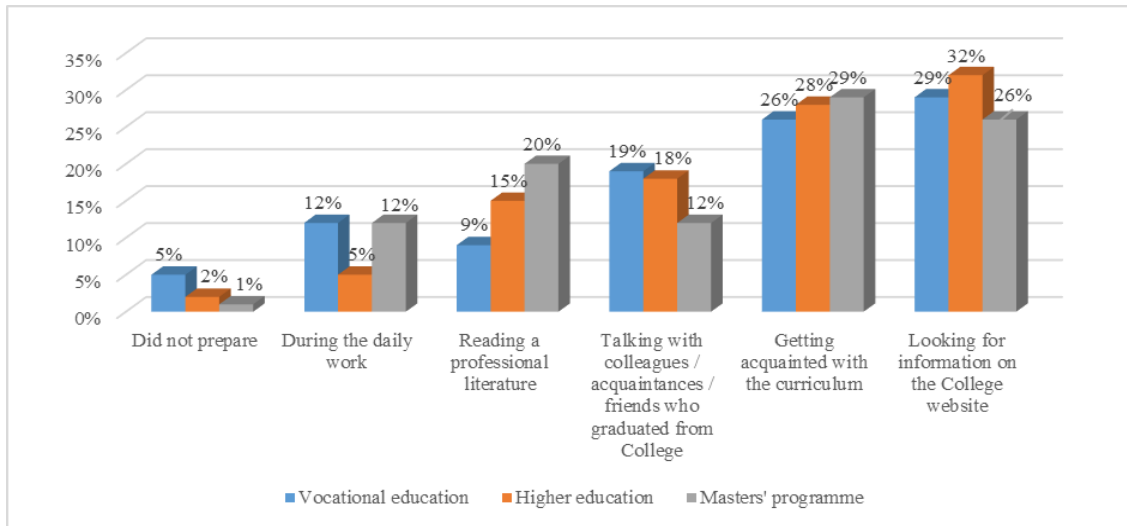


Figure 1. Preparing for admission

The adequacy of available information on the syllabus applied and admission examinations were included to the scored relatively high - 87% of respondents who applied for vocational education, 85% of respondents who applied higher education and 90% of respondents who applied for master's programme considered the information sufficient (Figure 2).

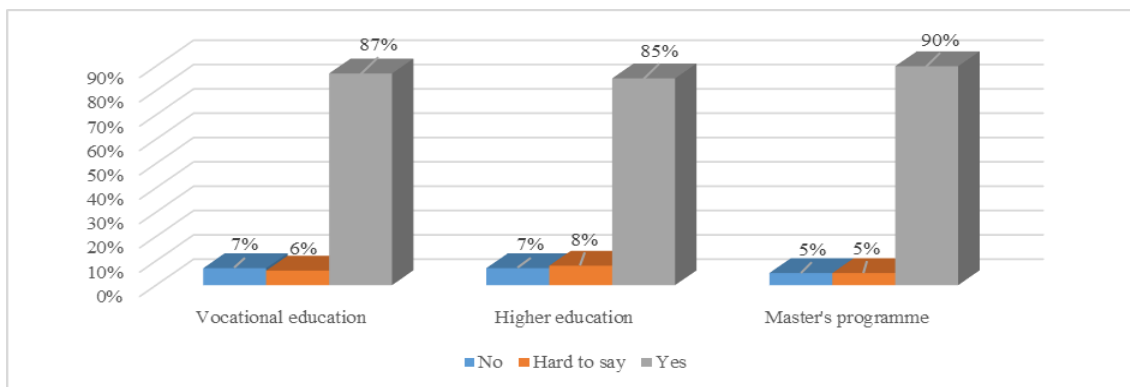


Figure 2. Satisfaction with the availability of information during the admission

Although Figure 2 shows the fact that the satisfaction rate with the availability of information was high among all education level candidates, a large number of comments suggested improvements to the communication. Candidates expect information on the different steps of the admission process to be easier and more systematic to find from the College's website, more information days and/or information question hours, even the preparation courses have been considered necessary. They want to know how long the admission interview will be. Information is also expected on the future study organization plan – e.g., on which days and hours the lessons will take place, etc. And yet, surprisingly, information is sought on how many students will be accepted to each curriculum. Master's students would like to know more about what exactly should be included in the submitted development project plan.

Vocational education:

- *The preparation courses are necessary.*
- *An information question hour for applicants would be necessary.*
- *Before starting an interview, it should be definitely to know how much time you have.*

Higher education:

- *I think it is worth organizing more information days.*
- *Information is sometimes chaotic on the website*
- *Indicate on the website the number of study places in each curriculum so that entrants can calculate the probability of admission themselves*
- *A little more information about the future lesson plan/study organization could be available*

- *It would be good if the website had information that, for example, when entering the dental technician profession, the experience of working in a laboratory is important.*
- *The website could be more systematic in order to find the necessary topics in a timely and fast manner.*
- *The number of study places could be on the website.*
- *More information about the admission interview and how to prepare and what topics to focus on*
- *To provide more information on what to be expected in the admission tests, because it is difficult for Russian-speaking people to orient themselves in Estonian-language tests of difficult subjects.*
- *Would like to have better information about the organization of studies. For example: What time do classes start and end? What days the study takes place and where? Then it would be better for the working person to plan their work before starting studies.*
- *The website must contain information on how many students are admitted to the speciality.*
- *I did not find information on how many people are admitted to the profession. I searched and searched, but unfortunately, I couldn't find it.*

Masters' programme:

- *I would like more information about the development project concept, the structure of the work.*
- *The information question hour was very useful.*
- *Finding information was easy.*
- *All the necessary information was available on the school's website and posted earlier so that the candidate could get acquainted with the information and prepare for it.*

Satisfaction ratings for the admission process were asked on a 5-point scale from 5 – highly satisfied; 4 – satisfied; 3 – rather satisfied; 2 – hard to say (neutral); 1 – highly dissatisfied. Figure 3 shows that the satisfaction of vocational education applicants with the admission process is the highest. The admission process was largely satisfied or very satisfied with the various parts and also in general. They were particularly satisfied with the organization of the reception of documents (4,46), as well as with the work of the admission committee (4,33). There is a slight criticism in the evaluations of the participants in higher education admissions for the different parts of the admission process. Looking at the scores of the different steps of the admission process and as a whole, it can be stated that the candidates who applied for higher education level were more satisfied with the organization of the receipt of the documents (4,35) and with the admission process comprehensively. The master's programme applicants were mostly satisfied with the organization of the reception of the document (4,4) and with the work of the admission committee (4,15).

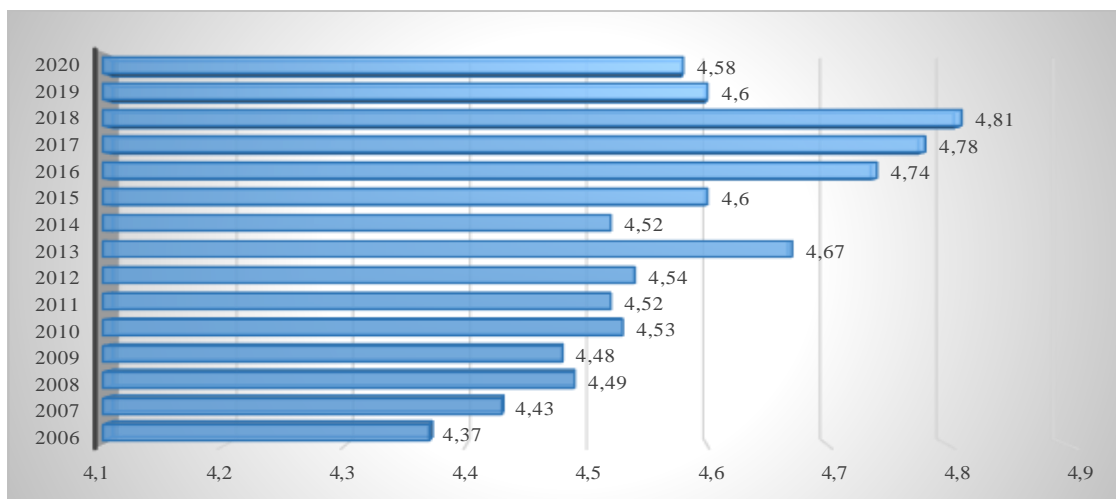


Figure 3. Ratings for the satisfaction of different steps and the admission process comprehensively

Feedback on the organization of the reception of documents has been sought since the first feedback survey in 2006. This part of the admission process has been one of the most controversial over the years. Although satisfaction with the process of receiving documents is significantly higher among candidates than in other parts of the reception process, it is

considerably lower compared to the satisfaction rating in the intervening years. As presented in Figure 4, satisfaction has fluctuated widely since 2006 when feedback on the receipt of documents was first requested. In 2020, satisfaction with the organization of the reception of documents has dropped to the same level as in 2006. In the intervening years, the estimates have been significantly higher, especially in 2010 (4.72), 2013 (4.76) and at a record level in 2017 (4.84) and 2018. (4.82). While in 2006 the documents were still received at the school on the spot, in 2009, documents could already be submitted both on the spot and online via the SAIS. SAIS had some limitations - there were many who could not submit documents and were happy to take the opportunity to submit their documents directly to the school. In the summer of 2020, this was not an option - everything had to be submitted online. It is possible that this was the main reason why the scores for the organization of receiving documents decreased slightly.

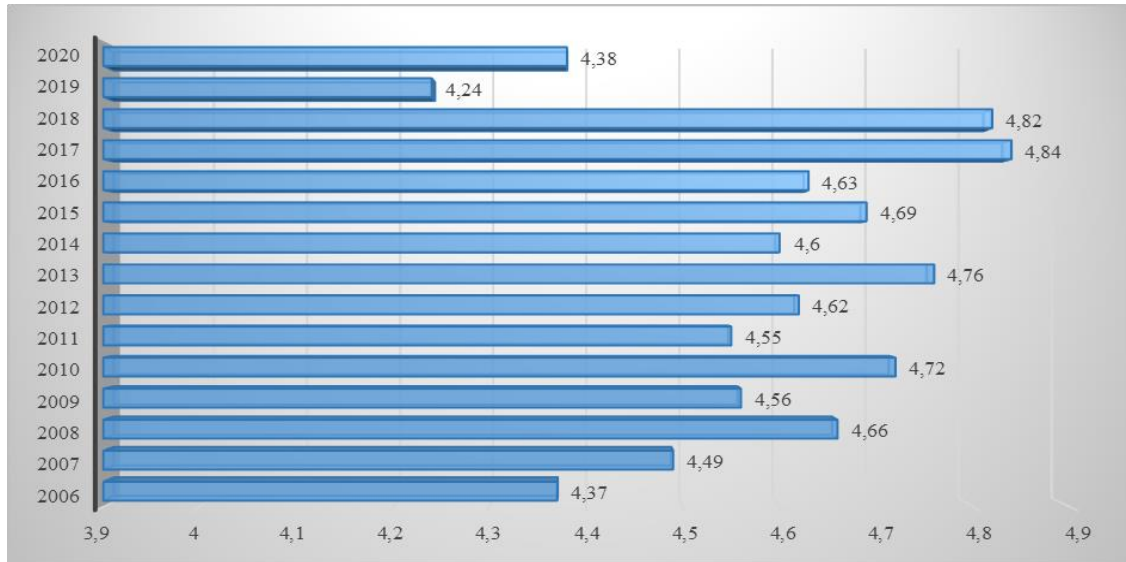


Figure 4. Satisfaction with the organization of the reception of documents 2006-2020

When comments from 2006, 2007, 2009, and also 2011 were included, complaints about the long waiting in queues and tired receptionists arose, and there were also complaints beginning in 2009 about the lack of experience, knowledge, and instructions of how to submit documents electronically:

- *We had to wait in line for a very long time.*
- *When I arrived on the spot, the documents were not accepted and I was told to apply them online. So, I drove a total of 300 km pointlessly because I can't do all the necessary things online.*
- *Apparently, the reception girls were already tired and nervous enough when I came with my documents on the last day to College.*
- *The SAIS system was complicated, it couldn't handle itself. I had to send the documents using the help of other people for this purpose.*
- *On-the-spot reception of documents was in high queues.*
- *The documents required for admission could also have been sent by e-mail (if not applicable to apply in SAIS).*
- *I had to personally deliver documents requiring education.*

In 2020 the comments about the organization of reception of documents were highly supportive:

- *Everything was at a high level. Everything was clear, concise and understandable. When there were questions about submitting documents online (Sais), there was always an answer on how to do everything correctly.*
- *All the necessary documents could be submitted through a computer and did not have to be uploaded separately.*

Since 2013, feedback has also been asked on candidates' assessments of the work of admissions committees. Figure 5 shows that ratings have fallen over the last two years, but the valuable comments added have been carried with a more positive attitude as the negative one from applicants at all levels, although it should be admitted that the higher education applicants showed more criticism than other education level candidates.

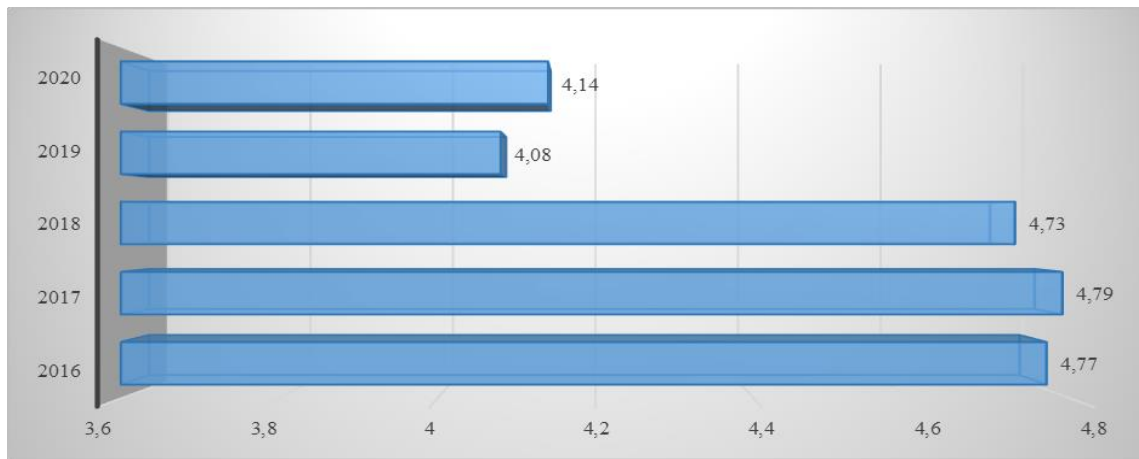


Figure 5. Satisfaction with the work of the admission Committee

Vocational education candidates appreciated the admission committee's friendly and open attitude and the members' skills to make a calming atmosphere to applicants:

- *Pleasant communication with educators during ZOOM interviews, very attentive and friendly people.*
- *The attitude of the admissions committee, nice and friendly women. I don't know if I got in or not, but thanks to them anyway.*
- *The members of the Committee were competent in their work, very attentive and understanding.*
- *Professional approach. The conversation was not very strictly formal - it helped not to get very nervous. Thank you!*
- *Pleasant and friendly atmosphere. Clear and understandable questions. There was an immediate interest in the candidates for further joint cooperation. Thank you!*

Higher education students highlighted the professional attitude and relevant questions asked. They also valued that they had an opportunity to explain why they choose the specific subject and how they are planning to manage their life during the studies.

- *I liked the interview the most. The admissions committee was very friendly and kind. The questions were relevant, understandable and not difficult. It was, above all, a conversation, I did not have any fear or anxiety.*
- *I liked the interview in Zoom because the Committee was friendly, professional, sympathetic, kind and humorous. The questions were dignified, not very difficult. I liked that during the conversation I had the chance to explain my choice of speciality.*
- *Admissions Committee - very nice and pleasant people, although I shuddered, I felt comfortable due to their positive energy.*
- *Warm and good atmosphere, I realized that the commission believes that I want to become a nurse and listen to why and where this decision came from. I liked everything.*

However, the higher education candidates were more critical than other candidates and pointed out that the interview could have started with a mutual introductory part, which would also help to reduce the candidate's tension. The applicants liked the questions related to the speciality. It was some amazing about personal questions, such as where the student gets the money to commit to learning or how he or she intends to combine school and work.

- *A small introductory section to relieve tension.*
- *The admissions committee could also introduce itself during the admission tests.*
- *Members of the Admissions Committee could be more polite.*
- *The Admissions Committee should not underestimate or ridicule the sense of mission or the desire to improve the world.*
- *The members of the admissions committee could be more positive, cheerful and motivating.*
- *The Commission did not introduce itself. The interviewer hurried after the conversation and did not let me end my sentences. The required task was also interrupted before the scheduled 5 minutes. All in all, it seemed as if there was no time or interest in me as a candidate to delve deeper.*
- *The first half of the conversation was very positive: why do you come to study, which field of study? The other side caused confusion. With questions like where do I get money or who pays for my lifestyle, how do I plan to go to work, there is no relevant content for making such a short appeal and getting to know the person.*

- *Introducing questions to start a suitable conversation is relevant.*
- *The Committee could ask more professional questions during the interview.*

Master's programme candidates were waiting for more professional rather than general questions and also highlighted the missing introductory part:

- *The Committee was friendly, helping to ease tensions.*
- *Positive admissions Committee.*
- *Calm and supportive attitude.*

• *In the Zoom environment, it was not clear with whom the conversation took place. Not introduced. No chat time specified. Chat timed out. The pace was fast and the answers to the questions were not heard to the end.*

• *General questions were asked during the interview. Unfortunately, this does not necessarily indicate the candidate's communication and analysis skills. Also, getting acquainted with the curriculum and naming the subject modules that have aroused interest does not indicate whether the candidate is suitable to study in the chosen field.*

Feedback on the admission format was asked from 2013 onwards. There are comments from the 2014 feedback survey that characterizes well the difference between then and 2020: *Everything was very good :) But it would be better if the College can arrange the admission process the way that there is no need to travel to Tallinn three times for three different reason – for a test, for an exam, and finally for an interview (and for 9 o'clock in the morning!) and The admission could have been arranged on consecutive dates or even same day to make things faster and more convenient for applicants.*

As we can see from the Figure 6, the 2020 admission format has brought the highest score - 4.81. This shows that even though many candidates did not like the online interview and doubted the objectivity and reliability of the results of the technology-mediated admission test performed from home or work, the full introduction of the online admission brought unprecedented convenience, outweighing some technical problems and moments of confusions on the web.

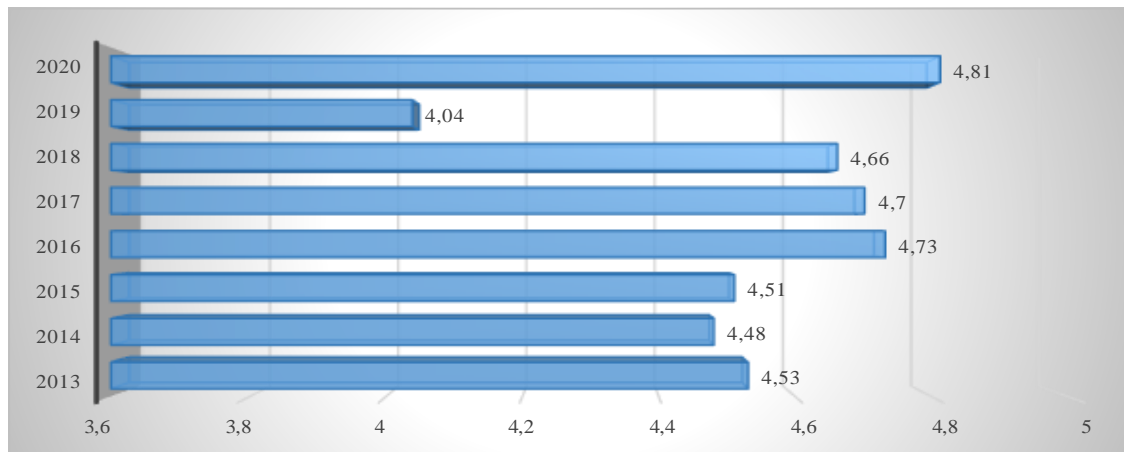


Figure 6. Satisfaction with the format of the admission test and interview

Vocational education candidates were more critical of online admission interview than others, in their opinion it may not give the right or adequate impression of the candidate. Candidates also felt that the interview was too short and should be longer.

- *The time limit could be higher for interview.*
- *The interview should not certainly take place via the Internet; more questions should be asked to determine suitability for the profession.*
- *Since I had not used Zoom before, it was a new option for me, but more convenient.*
- *Everything was high quality, clear, concise and understandable. When questions arose, there was always an answer on how to do everything right.*
- *I liked the admission organization you currently have.*
- *More free communication, so it is not inconvenient to be at the interview.*
- *Would like a long conversation during the admission interview to better introduce myself and my desire to learn.*
- *The interview should not be held via a computer.*

Higher education applicants' feedback is divided into two when commenting on online admission. Some are very enthusiastic about the new format and want it to continue. Applicants

were satisfied with the remote format of the whole admission process and their main suggestion was that remote admission is here to stay. The other part wants the tests, exams and interviews to take place in the traditional way:

- *I liked the admission arrangement. I think it was convenient for all parties and at the same time new and interesting.*
- *The admission process was performed at a higher level. I am very happy with both the test and the conversation. Everything was very clear, understandable.*
- *I really enjoyed taking the exam online because I had a working day that day. This means that I agreed with my colleagues and went to lunch at a time that suited me. I didn't have to waste time driving there and back. Thank you!*
- *Whenever possible, face-to-face and a professional environment where technical details are pre-checked and exams/tests/conversations run smoothly.*
- *The interview could have taken place face-to-face and on-site, in order to avoid the technical problems that arose.*
- *The Zoom environment was not convenient for me because I am afraid of the camera*
- *I didn't like the admission interview because of the Zoom, but I understand why it was moved there.*
- *The reception interview in Zoom was about 25 minutes late. Scheduling can be improved.*
- *It was very inconvenient to participate in the interview online, as direct contact works better in such a situation. Even during the coronavirus, interviews and entrance exams were conducted on the spot in some universities, which undoubtedly improves the quality of the results. An online chat can lead to a misunderstanding of the candidate because there is no direct contact.*

Candidates for the master's programme valued their time and were most satisfied with the admission process format. Also, it seems that master's programme applicants are generally more confident and familiar with new technologies:

- *Got all the necessary actions without going to school*
- *Everything was held via e-environment. There was no need to get there.*
- *Admission interview did not have to plan time to go to school separately and did not have to take time off work, it was very convenient to take a break from work and take part in the interview.*
- *The conversation took place in Zoom. I didn't have to take a day off and it was therefore a time saver.*
- *Opportunity to apply from a distance.*

The comments on the tests mainly included the concern of how the College checks that the test has been taken by the candidate himself and without outside help.

- *Admissions still need to be checked by the school because you never know who helped the candidate take this test. Not fair.*
- *Receptions could be arranged with a camera (e.g., Zoom) so that there is no risk of someone talking or taking the test.*
- *While the tests are being done, someone should also make sure that the right person is solving the test. Monitoring during the test, as the performance time was quite long*
- *However, the test should be performed under supervision.*
- *I think that the results of the online admission tests are not objective, because there is no way to check how honestly the entrant passed the tests and whether he/she passed them independently.*

Candidate suggestions for further admissions

The last questions gave respondents the opportunity to make suggestions for better reception and to indicate what they liked most about the reception tests.

Applicants highlighted that while this may save the admissions committee time, group chat was not considered a good solution, entrants would have expected a more personal approach. It was also assumed that the interview would be longer, which would have given the candidates more opportunities to prove their motivation and readiness to study:

- *I think the group chat 20min is a bit short.*
- *The group interview is unpleasant because some interviewees are distracting others.*
- *Have an interview with one person individually, not to take 3 people at a time.*
- *The duration of the interview was too short for me. I think it is very difficult to decide the person's suitability for the profession chosen during this time.*
- *I was prepared for more in-depth professional questions, but the conversation was very short*
- *More in-depth interviews, more questions.*

In conclusion, it can be said that mostly a pure positivity was expressed in the assessments and comments given to the admission process:

- *At the moment the admission process is well structured, all information was available*
- *As I am satisfied with the organization of the admission process, there is nothing more to add.*
- *The best experience so far.*
- *Continue in the same direction.*
- *Despite a different situation, this year's reception was well organized.*

Conclusions and discussion

Healthcare and medicine are complex and evolving fields, and professionals working in related fields must have not only the practical and academic knowledge and skills acquired at school, but also the personal qualities suitable for the job, such as critical thinking, communication skills, teamwork, empathy, cultural sensitivity, ethical decisions, self-evaluation, and self-control, etc. Schools involved in the training of future medical and health professionals have a responsible task - how to recognize future motivated and learning students who want to contribute to the development of their profession, and those who enter the labour market as highly qualified professionals, during the admission process.

Much research has been done to investigate what a perfect admission process should look like. At the same time, there is a lack of in-depth research on what candidates themselves think of this whole process. Such research and feedback surveys should be carried out more, and also shared with the public so that all higher education institutions in the medical and healthcare fields can improve and enhance the admission process.

The current article was based on a feedback survey of applicants conducted in the summer of 2020. The satisfaction of candidates in vocational education applied higher education and master's programme with the admission process was examined. Since for many, health and medicine are a speciality or field for those of a slightly later age, we wanted to find out which fields the entrants come from. In addition, the aim of the survey was to find out the reasons why Tallinn Health Care College was chosen for study, with whom the candidates discussed their choice before the admission process, which speciality was preferred, and what factors influenced this decision. They also wanted to know from which source information about the school was obtained, and what questions-doubts arose in the process of choosing a school and speciality. Some results were compared with the results of previous feedback surveys, if available, and the available data was presented by year. However, it should be mentioned that the survey has changed a lot over the years, and the possibility of comparison was opened only for a few satisfaction indicators.

The candidates chose Tallinn Health Care College mainly because of the suitable profession and the opportunity to find a job in the chosen field. The most important source for obtaining the information about College and speciality chosen before admission as well as for preparing for admission tests, exams and interview, was College's website. Satisfaction with the availability of information during the admission has decreased during 2019 and 2020 compared 2018, 2017, and 2016. The main reason was the difficulty of finding relevant information from the complex structure of the website. It was also suggested that the college should organize more preliminary information days/hours, and that there should be more information about the organization of studies after admission. Satisfaction with the reception of the documents process dropped in 2020 to the same level as it was in 2006. This fact needs further investigation considering that the comments on the process of receiving the documents were very supportive and impressed high satisfaction.

As highlighted in the conducted literature review, the admissions interview is considered one of the most important and usually the last step in the complex process of applying to medical or healthcare programmes. Adequate and fair assessment of each interviewee is the most important challenge for admissions committees when planning and conducting hundreds of interviews. Can this process be considered a success through the web? The candidates highly valued the Admissions Committee's friendly attitude and relaxed atmosphere, although more specific questions, and not so many related to personality, were expected. However, the technology-mediated group interview was probably not the best choice for an admission interview and this fact was also highlighted in the comments. The candidates' suggestions also included to extend the admission interview time (to spend more time on one candidate).

If in previous years, candidates complained about the need to travel to Tallinn or Kohtla-Järve several times for documents application, tests, and interviews, then this year there was no such concern - admission was 100% technology-mediated. Most applicants welcomed the new opportunity and appreciated the convenience of taking a test and interview from home or work

without spending money to travel. The others were not feeling comfortable and would have preferred a face-to-face interview.

Most of the candidates could not make suggestions for improving the organization of admissions. Everything was fine and they were satisfied with everything. There were a few suggestions: to increase the number of study spaces, to add more systemized information about the speciality and admission process to the website.

The authors of the current study hope that this article will encourage other health care educational institutions to share their admission feedback surveys and that way it is possible to compare experiences and learn from candidate feedback mutually. The shared admission feedback studies gave an opportunity to analyse whether the educational institution has done its best to support and inform candidates during the admission process; built online tests that do not raise questions about the reliability of how independently they were performed by applicants and that the tests would not be too easy or too difficult to settle; be prepared to provide faster feedback on the results of admission stages. Although there are several applicants to be interviewed and time is limited, to set up by professionals and lecturers an interview that runs smoothly and leaves enough time for candidates to introduce themselves and talk more about their preferences and speciality chosen. The interview structured in this way also ensures that the admissions committee has a sufficient understanding of the interviewee's characteristics and suitability as a future health care professional.

Non-cognitive characteristics can be evaluated face to face interview, a tool that has been considered important in the selection process. However, interviewers must be properly trained. Candidates should certainly have been informed that if their academic and learning ability has already been established based on high school diplomas and tests and trials, the interview will focus on whether the applicant's personal qualities are suitable for a tense curriculum, plenty of practice, and group work. However, it is also the responsibility of the admissions committee to ensure that all students admitted become not only excellent health care professionals but that they have the appropriate qualities, such as friendliness, helpfulness, teamwork skills, and patient-centeredness.

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