KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

# AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND

Författare **Eva Åkesson, Marc Perkins, Jürgen Seifried, Anni Siltanen, Mira Huusko and Hanna Väätäinen. Self-assessment of the University of Eastern Finland (eds.) Saila Vaittinen, Anu Arosanervo, Soili Makkonen and Maija Lahtela-Kakkonen**
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# Audit of the University of Eastern Finland

# Abstract

## Title of publication

Audit of the University of Eastern Finland

## Authors

Eva Åkesson, Marc Perkins, Jürgen Seifried, Anni Siltanen, Mira Huusko and Hanna Väätäinen. Self-assessment of the University of Eastern Finland (eds.) Saila Vaittinen, Anu Arosanervo, Soili Makkonen and Maija Lahtela-Kakkonen

## The Higher Education Evaluation Committee’s decision

The University of Eastern Finland passed the audit on 3 March 2023.

The Quality Label is valid until 3 March 2029.

## The audit team’s evaluation of the evaluation areas I-III

I: HEI creates competence: *good* level

II: HEI promotes impact and renewal: *good* level

III: HEI enhances quality and well-being: *good level*

## HEI as a learning organisation – evaluation area chosen by the University of Eastern Finland

UEF as a study and work environment for international students and employees

## Theme and partner for benchlearning

Theme: Continuous learning incl. stakeholder cooperation.

Partner: The University of Jyväskylä

## Key strengths and recommendations

**Strengths**

- At UEF, there is a high level of commitment to the teaching and competence development

of students.
- UEF has a well-known strategy and fosters multidisciplinary research communities together with aligned support.
- UEF staff recognizes the connection of their own work with the goals and strategy of UEF. UEF works in a quality manner: evaluating practices with data and using those evaluations to drive future practices.
- Internationalization is a goal of UEF, and great progress has been made on internationalization in the recent past.

**Recommendations**

- The inclusion of all students and especially international students as well as doctoral researchers as full members of the community should be further developed**.**
- UEF should strengthen structures related to societal participation and the creation of partnerships, including processes for societal engagement especially with those unfamiliar with the university.
- UEF should strengthen the operations of the quality group. The quality group should meet more often and be more involved in facilitating quality work at the university.
- UEF should explore avenues to enhance career progression opportunities and career security as well as to improve Finnish language learning opportunities for international staff. The university should ensure that all community members, regardless of language skills, are able to participate in decision making and governance.

# Tiivistelmä

## Julkaisun nimi

Itä-Suomen yliopiston auditointi

## Tekijät

Eva Åkesson, Marc Perkins, Jürgen Seifried, Anni Siltanen, Mira Huusko ja Hanna Väätäinen
Itä-Suomen yliopiston itsearviointiraportti (toim.) Saila Vaittinen, Anu Arosanervo, Soili Makkonen ja Maija Lahtela-Kakkonen

## Korkeakoulujen arviointijaoston päätös

Itä-Suomen yliopiston auditointi on hyväksytty 3.3.2023.

Laatuleima on voimassa 3.3.2029 asti.

## Auditointiryhmän arvio arviointialueista I-III

I: Osaamista luova korkeakoulu: *hyvä* taso

II: Vaikuttava ja uudistava korkeakoulu: *hyvä* taso

III: Kehittyvä ja hyvinvoiva korkeakoulu: *hyvä* taso

## Oppiva korkeakoulu – Itä-Suomen yliopiston valitsema arviointialue

Itä-Suomen yliopisto kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden ja työntekijöiden opiskelu- ja työskentely-ympäristönä

## Vertaisoppimisen teema ja kumppani

Jatkuva oppiminen ml. sidosryhmäyhteistyö

Kumppani: Jyväskylän yliopisto

## Keskeiset vahvuudet ja kehittämissuositukset

**Vahvuudet**

- Itä-Suomen yliopiston sitoutuminen opetukseen ja osaamisen kehittämiseen on vahvaa.
- Itä-Suomen yliopiston henkilökunnan hyvin tuntemaa strategiaa toteutetaan monitieteisten

tutkimusyhteisöjen avulla ja siihen on suunnattu tukea.
- Henkilökunta tunnistaa oman työnsä yhteyden yliopiston tavoitteisiin ja strategiaan. Itä-Suomen yliopistossa huomioidaan laatukysymykset: toimintaa arvioidaan tiedon avulla ja saatua tietoa käytetään aktiivisesti kehittämiseen.
- Yliopiston tavoitteena olevassa kansainvälistymisessä on viime vuosina tapahtunut hyvää edistystä.

**Kehittämissuositukset**

- Itä-Suomen yliopiston tulee kehittää toimintaansa niin, että kaikki opiskelijat, erityisesti kansainväliset opiskelijat ja väitöskirjatutkijat, tuntevat olevansa yhteisön täysivaltaisia jäseniä.
- Yhteiskunnallista osallistumista ja kumppanuuksien luomista tulee vahvistaa erityisesti niiden kanssa, jotka eivät ole ennen tehneet yhteistyötä yliopiston kanssa.
- Yliopiston laaturyhmän toimintaa tulee vahvistaa. Laaturyhmän tulee kokoontua nykyistä useammin ja edistää nykyistä aktiivisemmin laatutyötä yliopistossa.
- Kansainvälisen henkilökunnan urakehitysmahdollisuuksia sekä suomen kielen oppimismahdollisuuksia tulee parantaa. Yliopiston tulee varmistaa, että kaikki yhteisön jäsenet kielitaidosta riippumatta voivat osallistua yliopiston päätöksentekoon ja hallintoon.

# Sammandrag

## Publikationens namn

Auditeringen av Östra Finlands universitet

## Författare

Eva Åkesson, Marc Perkins, Jürgen Seifried, Anni Siltanen, Mira Huusko och Hanna Väätäinen

Östra Finlands universitets självvärdering (red.) Saila Vaittinen, Anu Arosanervo, Soili Makkonen och Maija Lahtela-Kakkonen

## Beslutet av sektionen för utvärdering av högskolorna

Auditeringen av Östra Finlands universitet godkändes den 3 mars 2023.

Kvalitetsstämpeln är i kraft till och med den 3 mars 2029.

## Auditeringsgruppens omdöme för utvärderingsområdena I-III

I: En kompetensskapande högskola: *god* nivå

II: En nyskapande högskola med genomslagskraft: *god* nivå

III: En utvecklingsorienterad och välmående högskola: *god* nivå

## En lärande högskola, utvärderingsområdet som Östra Finlands universitet valde

Östra Finlands universitet som studie- och arbetsmiljö för internationella studerande och anställda

## Tema och partner för kollegialt lärande

Tema: Kontinuerligt lärande, inklusive samarbete med externa intressenter

Partner: Jyväskylä universitet

## Centrala styrkor och rekommendationer

### Styrkor

- Vid Östra Finlands universitet finns ett stort engagemang för undervisning och de studerandes kompetensutveckling.
- Östra Finlands universitet har en välkänd strategi för och genomförande av tvärvetenskapliga forskningsgrupperingar i kombination med anpassat stöd.
- Personalen vid Östra Finlands universitet känner till kopplingen mellan sitt eget arbete och målen och strategin för Östra Finlands universitet. Östra Finlands universitet arbetar på ett kvalitetsmässigt sätt: De utvärderar praktik med hjälp av data och använder dessa utvärderingar för att driva på framtida metoder.
- Internationalisering är ett mål för Östra Finlands universitet, och man har redan gjort stora framsteg under den senaste tiden i fråga om det.

### Rekommendationer

- Universitetet bör vidareutveckla sätt för att inkludera alla studerande och särskilt internationella studerande samt doktorander som fullvärdiga medlemmar av universitetssamfundet.
- Östra Finlands universitet bör stärka sina strukturer med anknytning till samverkan med samhället och skapandet av partnerskap, inklusive samverkansprocesser särskilt med de grupper som inte känner till universitetet.
- Östra Finlands universitet bör stärka kvalitetsgruppens verksamhet. Kvalitetsgruppen bör träffas oftare och bli mer delaktig i att facilitera kvalitetsarbetet vid universitetet.
- Östra Finlands universitet bör kartlägga sätt att förbättra karriärmöjligheterna och karriärsäkerheten samt förbättra möjligheterna till lärande av det finska språket för den internationella personalen. Östra Finlands universitet bör se till att alla inom universitetet, oavsett språkkunskaper, kan delta i beslutsfattandet och styrningen.

# The premise and implementation of the audit

The work of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is based on the principle of enhancement-led evaluation and producing impactful information which contributes to the enhancement of education.

The purpose of the audit model is

- to evaluate whether the quality work in the HEI meets the European quality assurance standards,
- to assess whether the quality system produces relevant information for the implementation of the strategy and the continuous development of the HEI's activities, and whether it results in effective enhancement activities,
- to encourage internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere at HEIs, and
- to accumulate open and transparent information on quality work at Finnish HEIs.

The principles of the audit model are described in the audit manual.

# The implementation of the audit

A four-member audit team carried out the audit. The members of the audit team were:

- Professor **Eva Åkesson**, Lund University, Sweden (chair)
- Student **Marc Perkins**, University of Jyväskylä, Finland
- Professor **Jürgen Seifried**, University of Mannheim, Germany
- Chief Advisor **Anni Siltanen**, The Chemical Industry Federation of Finland.

**Mira Huusko** from the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre acted as project manager of the audit and **Hanna Väätäinen** as back-up project manager. The audit is based on material submitted by the higher education institution, self-assessment report, additional material requested by the audit team and the audit team's visit to the institution between 9 and 10 November 2022. The audit team had also access to essential electronic materials and systems. The main stages and timetable of the audit were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Agreement negotiation | 27.5.2021 |
| Appointment of the audit team | 25.5.2022 |
| Submission of the audit material and self-assessment report | 17.8.2022 |
| Information and discussion event at UEF | 3.10.2022 |
| Audit visit | 9.-10.11.2022 |
| Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision on the result | 3.3.2023 |
| Publication of the report | 3.3.2023 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Concluding seminar | 3.4.2023 |
| Follow-up on the enhancement work | 2026 |

# Evaluation criteria

The evaluation areas I–III are each assessed as one entity using the scale *excellent, good, insufficient*.

The level *excellent* means that the HEI shows evidence of long-term and effective enhancement work. The HEI's enhancement activities also create substantial added value for the HEI, stakeholders, or both. The HEI presents compelling examples of successful enhancement activities.

The level *good* for the evaluation areas I–III is described in appendix 1.

The level *insufficient* means that the HEI shows an absence of or major shortcomings in systematic, functioning, and participatory procedures in the evaluation area (I–III). There is no clear evidence of the impact of quality management in the enhancement of activities.

In order for the HEI to pass the audit, the evaluation areas I–III should reach at least the level *good*.

# The organisation and strategy of the HEI

## A multidisciplinary university

The University of Eastern Finland is one of the most multidisciplinary universities in Finland. The University has systematically built its strategy towards more multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research and education, and through them, impact. Research and education respond to global challenges and build a sustainable future.

The university offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in 13 fields of study. UEF has also been given degree awarding authority in the field of engineering, and bachelor of engineering, master of engineering, and doctor of engineering training will start on 1 August 2023.

UEF has campuses in Joensuu and Kuopio. Two of the university's four faculties are located on both campuses. The university has a Language Centre, Library, and a Centre for Continuous Learning (CCL), as well as a pharmacy. University services are organised as a single service provision, regardless of whether people work in faculty-specific services or in centralised services.

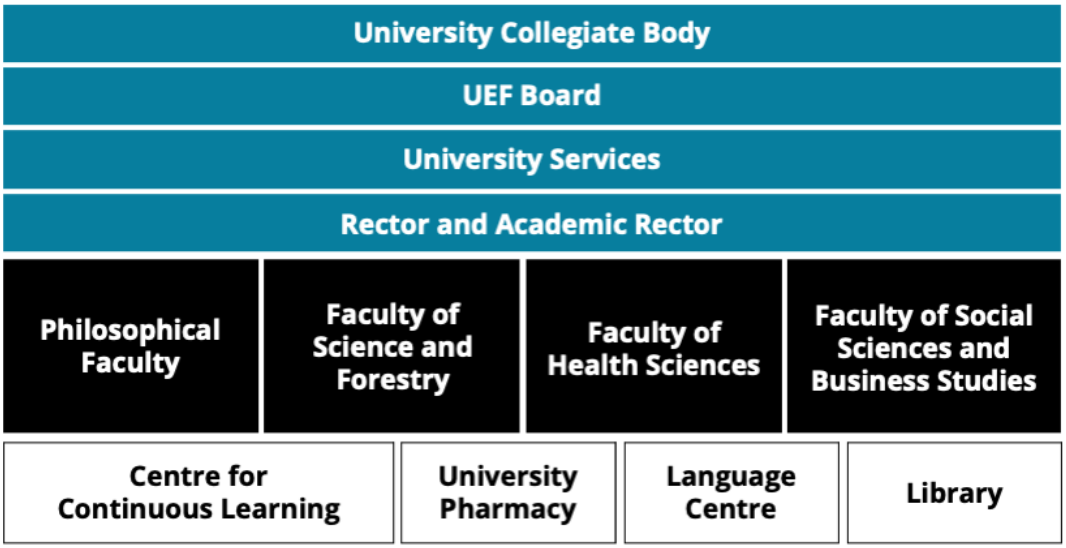



Figure 1 UEF's Organisation

UEF is one of the largest providers of open university education in Finland.

UEF 2030 Strategy – Seizing a Sustainable Future is rooted in global challenges to which we seek solutions in our profile areas through interdisciplinary research and education. The profiles areas are 1) Ageing, lifestyles and health 2) Cultural encounters, mobilities and borders 3) Diversifying

learning and interaction and 4) Environmental change and sustainable use of natural resources.

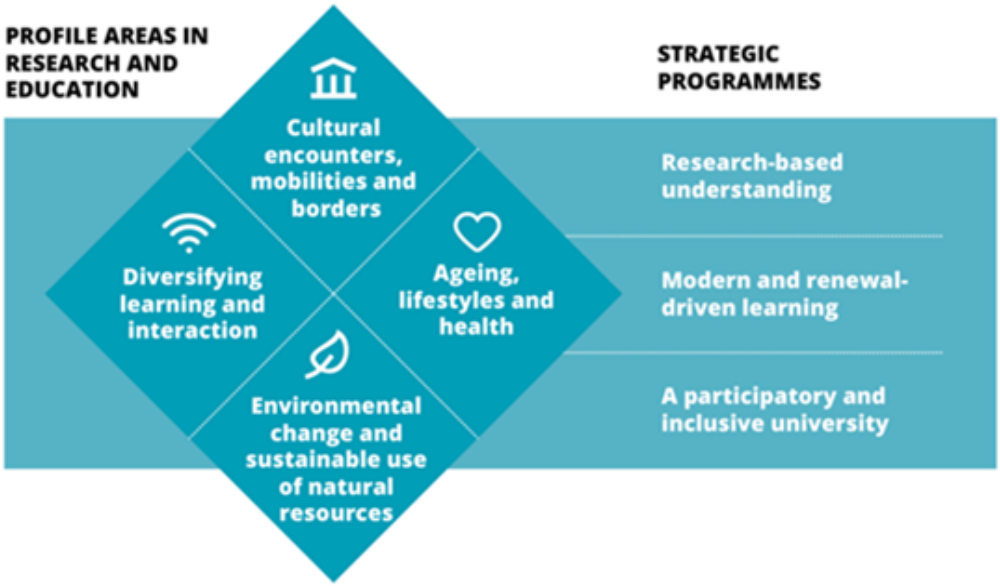



Figure 2 UEF Strategy 2030

**Programme 1. Research-based understanding**

1) World-class science – a high standard of interdisciplinary research
2) Science for all – a pioneer of open science and science communication
3) Part of regional and global development – a key agent of interaction in ecosystems

**Programme 2. Modern and renewal-driven learning**

1) A learner-centred university – student-centred and networked learning environments
2) Continuous learning – education that anticipates societal needs
3) International expertise – stronger mobility and educational immigration

**Programme 3. A participatory and inclusive university**

1) Strong sense of community – an academic community characterised by well-being
2) Renewal-driven expertise – motivated staff and recognised strengths
3) Open interaction and smooth service

The implementation of strategic programmes is supported by strategic funding at the university level.
Part of the funding has been agreed for the performance contract period (support for research communities, doctoral training, implementation of online and multi-modal pedagogy). This will strengthen interdisciplinary research and pedagogical development in education, among other things, over the long term. The strategic programmes are updated annually.

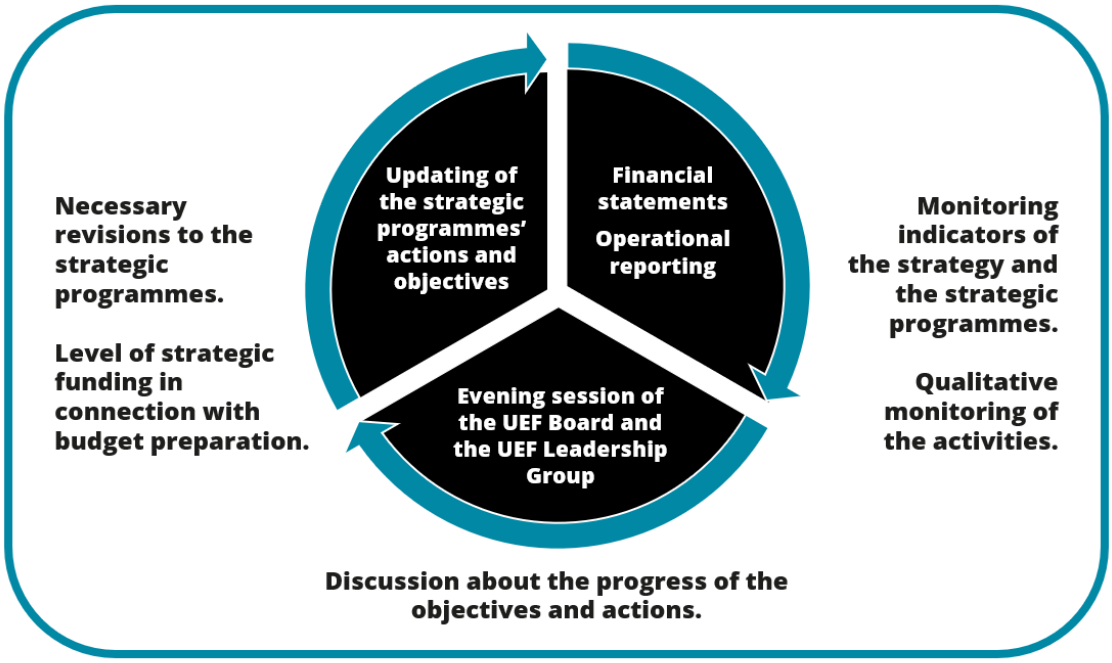



Figure 3 Monitoring of strategic programmes

In line with the principles of continuous quality development, the university participates in regular evaluation processes:




Figure 4 UEF's Quality labels

# 1 HEI creates competence

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

The evaluation area I assesses the procedures which support student-centred, working-life oriented planning, implementation and enhancement of education, which is based on research or artistic activities.

## Based on the audit team’s evaluation, evaluation area I is at the level *good*.

**The audit team identified the following key strengths and recommendations:**

**Strengths**

- At the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), there is a high level of commitment to teaching and competence development of students.
- The planning of education is a coherent and transparent process that is clearly linked to the university strategy.
- Open and flexible degree programmes provide students with multiple opportunities to acquire individual competence profiles.

**Recommendations**

- The inclusion of all students and especially international students as well as doctoral researchers as full members of the community should be further developed.
- UEF should involve more external stakeholders in the process when revising existing study programmes.
- UEF opens many choices and individual learning paths for students. For this, students need appropriate support in designing their learning paths. The information available at UEF on students’ learning activities and learning outcomes should be linked more coherently and used extensively to support students.

# 1.1 The planning of education

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## Managing education

The university's educational management which UEF's Academic Rector is responsible for, supports the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of strategic objectives. The university has a Council for Teaching and Guidance in accordance with the University Regulations for supporting the management of education. The faculties' designated deputy deans are responsible for education, together with the deputy heads of departments and divisions of education. The persons responsible for education form a network of pedagogical leaders which develop and share good practices of teaching. Students are represented in the Council for Teaching and Guidance, and in faculty/departmental/unit-specific teaching development groups.

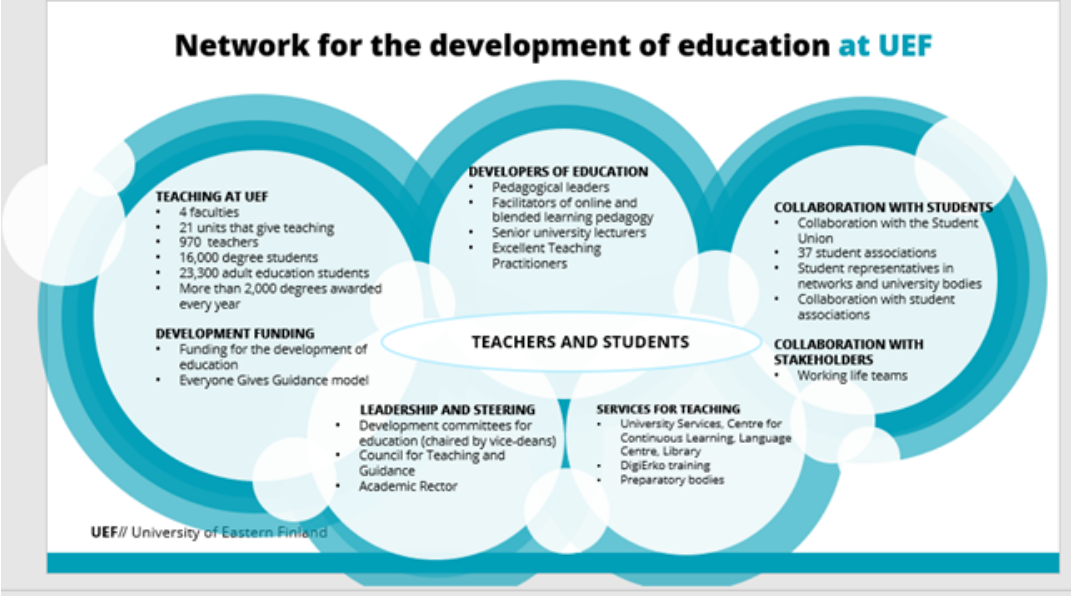


Figure 5 Network for the development of education at UEF

The Education Leadership and Development Network organises webinars and other events on education development topics to engage teachers and students in jointly planning, evaluating, and implementing development measures. The network also supports the dissemination of good practices.

## Curriculum work, relevance to working life, and continuous learning

The university's degree structures and curricula are based on the national frameworks and laws of each field. The Council of Teaching and Guidance prepares guidelines for curriculum work which are approved by the Academic Rector. The guidelines of UEF Doctoral School are prepared by the Steering Committee for Research. Curricula are prepared by the

faculties/units/departments and are approved by the faculty councils. Staff and students are involved in the preparation and decision-making process.  To support curriculum work, UEF organises training sessions for teachers. UEF has also developed a calculator for teachers (ECTS meter) for estimating students' workload. Course surveys ask for feedback on course workloads.

For relevance with working life, stakeholders are consulted in education development, for example through work-life seminars and stakeholders' meetings. This cooperation is deep especially in medicine, pharmacy, and teacher training. In generalist disciplines in the humanities, the HUMUS project has incorporated cooperation with working life partners on courses, developed internship opportunities, and created principles for cooperation on theses.

The curricula include generic, transferable skills to apply substantive skills in new situations and for learning new skills. The Peppi system describes a set of these generic competences, for example digitalisation, ethics, internationalisation, sustainability and responsibility, critical thinking, and interaction and communication for qualifications with common headings. From these sustainability and responsibility themed courses have been included in the curricula. Questions about general competences have been added to the university's student feedback from 2021 onwards for assessing the implementation and effectiveness of the development activities.

UEF offers a wide range of courses/services to help students learn skills and opportunities for entrepreneurship, and substantive entrepreneurship skills-based elements are included in various fields' curricula. UEF offers a minor subject in entrepreneurship open to all students.

The university has implemented a systemic change in continuous learning, with closer, more streamlined collaboration between the faculties/units and the Centre for Continuous Learning. The curricula for 2022-2025 were prepared in cooperation between the Centre for Continuous Learning, the Language Centre, and the faculties. Forecasting is used systematically and cooperation with working life is modelled as part of a continuous learning approach to strengthen the relevance of education to the world of work.

## Internationalisation is reflected in curricula

The university offers more than twenty international master's programmes and two international bachelor's programmes. The number of international degree programmes is growing. The university's degree programmes offer courses in English, the number of which s constantly increasing, especially at the basic and intermediate levels. Finnish as a second language (S2) is compulsory in all English-language programmes. In addition to the international degree programmes, students can complete a free minor in internationalisation (25-35 credits). International student exchange is open to all students.

The UEF Trainee internship programme enables students on international master's programmes to undertake paid internships. In autumn 2021, the programme was opened to external

companies. The university will assist in recruiting trainees and pay their salary.

The university belongs to the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) alliance, which is an alliance between ten young European research-intensive universities. UEF is a part of YUFE Virtual Campus, which offers academic courses in English and various language courses. UEF is also a part of the European Bioeconomy University (EBU).

## Supporting the development of teaching in a variety of ways

Teaching development has been supported through separate programmes and funding for several developing areas: online and multi-modal pedagogy, innovative teaching methods, cross-institutional study opportunities, and other collaborative teaching, developing lifelong learning products, student guidance and well-being, commissioned education products, and generic skills development.

Chosen teaching methods and learning assessment support the achievement of learning outcomes. The university has systematically developed learning environments and digital pedagogy.  The university has provided teacher training for activating and diverse teaching methods, the most significant of which is Flipped classroom teaching. Support for teachers is extensive and available for all and includes: university pedagogical training, teaching development projects, seminars on learning environments , online and multi-modal pedagogical facilitators, and a wide range of support services.

The university has hastened the expansion of distance learning/hydrid education and has developed its activities via various pilots. For example, DigiErko training (60 credits) is offered for teachers. The university rewards annually talented teachers who form the Excellent Teaching Practitioner Network, which aims to increase appreciation of, and develop teaching.

Researchers transfer the latest knowledge/methods of research to teaching and almost all researchers teach. The degree programmes are developed based on feedback/statistics on teaching, learning, guidance, and qualifications.

Students can take courses were they can familiarize to do research. The university has an active doctoral school. Doctoral studies include discipline-specific studies based on current research. The doctoral school provides joint training in the philosophy of science and research ethics for all doctoral programmes.

| Strengths | Enhancement areas |
| --- | --- |
| Free minor subjects | Systematic use of student feedback in the development of teaching and highlighting the effectiveness of feedback |
| Online and multi-modal pedagogy and facilitators | Regular assessment and renewal of competence objectives |
| Generic competence development process 2021-2023 | Including higher education-related development projects into teachers' work plans in such a way that they don't overburden teachers |
| A multidisciplinary package of sustainability studies | Increasing support for student career planning, including entrepreneurship opportunities |
| UEF – trainee programme | |

An effective education management and governance system

Lecturer in the Philosophy of Science and Research Ethics (Doctoral School)

# 1.1 The planning of education

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

## Educational provision is clearly linked to UEF strategy

UEF’s degree programmes are clearly linked to the university’s strategy. As mentioned in the University’s Self-Assessment Report (SAR), the implementation of “modern and renewed learning” is one of the goals of UEF’s Strategy 2030. The university strategy has several targets that are related to education. UEF strives to be a learning-centred university and to create student-centred and networked learning environments. As UEF is one of the largest providers of open higher education in Finland, continuous learning and education that anticipates societal needs is also highlighted as a strategic goal. The same applies to the internationalisation of teaching and learning.

The courses of study, degrees, and other educational provision are planned with clearly defined intended learning outcomes. As mentioned in the SAR as well as during the audit visit, the PEPPI study data system is used to support and guide the definition of learning outcomes. Generic competences, such as digitalisation, ethics, internationalisation, sustainability and responsibility, critical thinking, interaction, and communication, are part of the curriculum. This underlines the high relevance of the education provision for the future workplace or employment.

Numerous institutions and departments of UEF are involved in the design of study programmes. The process seems well coordinated between the different bodies. For example, the Lifelong Learning and Continuous Learning curricula for 2022−2025 were developed in collaboration between the Centre for Continuous Learning, the Language Centre, and the faculties. UEF focuses on research- and evidence-based teaching. In the audit visit, it became clear that research activities are integrated into education in a way that links research-based information to education in a relevant way. The importance of constructively aligning intended learning outcomes, teaching, and learning assessment was emphasised by various university representatives during the audit visit including the teacher’s workshop. Flipped learning pedagogy, widely adopted by faculty members, supports student-centred learning, promotes deeper understanding and is in line with the ideas of modern learning.

The faculty councils of UEF approve the curricula, and UEF ensures that degrees and learning outcomes are in line with the national qualifications’ framework. Student workload is determined according to the principles of ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). A calculator (ECTS-Meter) is available to the teaching staff to estimate the workload of the students. Feedback on the students’ workload is requested in course surveys. During the audit visit, students indicated that they are heard when it comes to the distribution of the workload over the academic year.

There is a clear focus on the needs of the labour market especially in medicine, pharmacy, forest sciences, and teacher training. In the general education subjects of the humanities, the HUMUS project is a good example of UEF's efforts to involve stakeholders in planning teaching and learning.

## Interdisciplinarity, internationalisation and continuous learning should be more integrated into the planning of education

In Strategy 2030, UEF has emphasised the importance of developing competences through interdisciplinary research and teaching. In the audit visit, it was revealed that these aspects are also relevant for the planning of education. It seems that interdisciplinarity is mainly implemented in more advanced degree programmes than the bachelor's degree. The audit team recommends that UEF strengthens the strategic goals of multidisciplinary and excellent research in all educational programmes.

Internationalisation is anchored in the university's strategy and should also be considered in the planning of the degree programmes. At UEF, there is a wide range of international study programmes, especially master's and doctoral programmes, and new international programmes are in preparation. There are also various joint Erasmus Mundus programmes. There is a small sub-project on professional intercultural competence. Programmes like this are relevant for embedding internationalisation in all degree programmes. However, it is not easy to get Finnish students to study abroad anymore and in the past students had more connections to international universities and other countries. UEF should be attentive here. Since UEF belongs to the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) alliance and is also part of the European Bioeconomy University (EBU), the audit team recommends using its international partnership opportunities to integrate internationalisation as well as benchmarking and joint initiatives into the educational provision to enhance internationalisation. In the next phase of curriculum design, all programmes need to include internationalisation issues in the planning of courses for all students.

In the audit visit, it became clear that continuous learning is a central theme at UEF and is considered when planning education. One of the strengths of the university's educational provision is that UEF integrates continuous learners into regular courses and ensures the integration of continuous learners within the university. Every graduate can apply for continuous learner status. The audit team recommends using this approach to strengthen the relationship between UEF and its alumni.

## Stakeholder involvement and student participation should be strengthened

## in the planning of education

During the audit visit, it was evident that both students and external stakeholders are involved in the planning of education. Students can participate in the development of the current study programmes as well as in the development of new programmes. However, student involvement could be further developed, and the members of the student union reported difficulties in getting students to participate in different committees.

External stakeholders are consulted in the development of study programmes through work-life seminars and stakeholder meetings. This collaboration is particularly intensive in the areas of medicine, pharmacy, and teacher training. The relationship with local stakeholders is close. There is an ongoing process to involve stakeholders in discussions about future labour market needs and to anticipate changes in the UEF environment in both locally and globally. Stakeholders report excellent engagement in creating new programmes, but limited engagement in renewing existing programmes.

The audit team recommends more systematic use of stakeholder expertise to improve study programmes and especially in the renewal of existing programmes. Extensive stakeholder involvement in the planning and operation of existing study programmes would be beneficial for skills development and would help UEF to ensure the relevance of study programmes to working life. The audit team recommends strengthening the implementation of processes of ongoing reflection on future competency goals.

# 1.2 The implementation of education

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## Fair and appropriate student selection and flexible study paths

UEF follows national guidelines in student selection processes having clear selection criteria and common guidelines aligned with the Council for Teaching and Guidance. The university is actively involved in a national development project to provide a clear and smooth route to university studies.

The admissions routes and selection criteria are published beforehand on the opintopolku.fi portal, which is open to all. The selection process has been developed, in particular by expanding Open University routes and opening up multi-modal training to meet the needs of working life. The number applicants applying via an Open University route has increased, and the number of people admitted through the route has risen sharply.
The selection criteria for doctoral programmes and the guidelines for research proposals have been refined and are open to applicants, and application deadlines and English language requirements have been harmonised.

Students can apply to the University of Eastern Finland's Board of Appeals for an appeal against the decision if they are dissatisfied with the student selection.

Students have flexibility to change their major subject inside the university, and an elective minor study right allows for individual combinations of skills. It is also possible to transfer from university to another within the same major/field as a so-called transfer student based on the selection criteria set by each university.

A flexible personal study plan (PSP) process allows students to take an active role in their own learning and the learning process. Instructions on the recognition of competencies have been outlined and, where necessary, specified at the faculty level and the documentation is openly available. The broad elective study right also encourages students to consider different options for their own study path.

The university has extensive educational cooperation with various higher education institutions. There are many types of educational cooperation. For example, one higher education institution may offer another institution courses that are compulsory in their degree structures, or they may jointly offer a wide range of elective courses for all.

## Connections with working life in education

Links with working life are created and maintained through working life days, career guidance,

expert lectures on working life, traineeships and thesis work in companies. There are compulsory traineeships for studies in professional fields e.g. pharmacy and teacher training. In addition, the faculties strongly support generalist disciplines. The Teacher Training Schools provide most teacher training at the university and they are involved in a network that ensures the needs of teacher training in other training locations. Traineeships as part of undergraduate degrees support the formation of connections with working life. The degree structures of international master's programmes have been strengthened to include a traineeship component.

The student organisations have been offered training and coaching in creating working life events (paid by the university) to strengthen the engagement and expertise in building cooperation with working life from a view of the student organisations.

In doctoral studies, the Academic Working Life Skills course allows students to gain skills through relevant courses connected to working life and for example, by participating in academic events and trainings.

## Investing in study support and student well-being

UEF has a well-established tutor process that starts when a student is accepted into the university. The student is assigned their own student and staff tutor who offer guidance in both study-related matters and in getting used to the university and student life. Teachers responsible for personal study plans in process help each student to take their individual studying pathway. The Student Union is heavily involved in the development of peer tutoring and orientation during the initial guidance. The university has invested in student guidance by developing the Everyone Gives Guidance model and the Digistartti orientation package.

Students receive feedback on their learning outcomes through several procedures at the group and individual levels. Feedback can be related to an exam or assignment or portfolio, or it can be verbal feedback in a learning situation. Cumulative learning feedback is applied for example in pharmacy and biomedicine.

Student progress data is available at the faculty/department/subject level for the monitoring of degrees. Digital tools for systematic tracking of students' progress have been developed to identify drop-outs at the subject/departmental level and get them back into education or, if necessary, referred to the necessary support and guidance services. Analysis of study paths has been piloted, and good practices of them are shared through the pedagogical leaders network, for example.

In doctoral studies, the university ensures that each doctoral student has at least two supervisors who provide support for the advancement of studies and learning. The doctoral programme coordinators also provide support and guidance throughout doctoral studies.

Special attention has been paid to student well-being. The university has participated in several key projects of the Ministry of Education and Culture to develop students' guidance and well-

being. The most significant of these are the reform of initial guidance and the investments made in student well-being during and after the coronavirus pandemic, such as a resource for student psychologists and sports advisers. The university hired five well-being coordinators in spring 2021. In addition, well-being coordinators contacted all students during the coronavirus pandemic to reach out to those who needed special support in their studies, provided them with peer support, and referred them to other services if necessary.  The university hired 44 teaching assistants for the departments/units in autumn 2021 to support teachers and students in changes in the organisation of teaching.

Through its Bridges I and II projects, the university has implemented several measures in cooperation with the Student Union to support student well-being. The most extensive of these have been the creation of the Student2Student operating model and the recruitment of a third student psychologist.

The university has also renewed several of its guidelines on student well-being, including the early intervention model. The university has shared guidelines and recommendations in Kamu to ensure equal treatment of students in terms of student admissions, enrollment, tuition fees and scholarships, recognition and accreditation of competencies, and applying for extra time.

The university has an Equal Opportunities Committee, which includes representatives of staff organisations, the Student Union, and the employer. It has prepared an Equality and Equal Opportunities Plan, which describes the current situation regarding gender equality and equal opportunities at the university and measures intended to implement and promote gender equality and equal opportunities among staff and students.

| **Strengths** | **Enhancement areas** |
|---|---|
| Extensive connections between degrees and working life | Systematic monitoring of study progress and development of pathway analysis to identify drop-outs |
| Significant investment in student well-being | The need to improve the use of personnel and facilities resources to cope with the growing number of students |
| Initial guidance (including Digistartti) | Development and harmonisation of guidance counselling and training |
| Good e-learning support services | Monitoring the supervision of doctoral dissertation work |
| Consolidating the utilisation of open learning materials | |

# 1.2 The implementation of education

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

### Clear and consistent student selection processes are in place

UEF has clear and consistent selection procedures for students. UEF follows national guidelines for student selection procedures with clear selection criteria and common guidelines agreed with the Teaching and Guidance Council. The admission routes and selection criteria are published on the Studyinfo.fi -portal. Studyinfo is an official website maintained by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The selection process has been further developed, especially by expanding the Open University routes. A bot system supports students in their search for information. All relevant information is easily accessible and available also in English.

### Flexible learning with personal study plans supports students' learning processes

A flexible system of personal study plans (PSP) supports students' learning processes. Students can choose between a variety of minor subjects and earn additional ECTS in areas that interest them. A further strengthening of the individualisation of studies can be seen in the fact that there is a comprehensive system for the recognition of prior learning at the UEF. The importance of the active role of students was emphasised both in the SAR and in the audit visit. The opportunities for students can be described as good, but there is also room for improvement. For example, students reported that in some cases students have little opportunity to work in an interdisciplinary way. The audit team recommends UEF to explore how to give students more opportunities to work in interdisciplinary ways and enhance access to learning spaces.

The high degree of flexibility requires a high level of guidance and counselling. In the discussion with students during the audit visit, it was shown that there is still room for improvement in some areas and that students would like to see contact persons clearly named who can then deal with the students' concerns. As mentioned in the SAR and in the audit visit, students receive feedback on their learning outcomes through various procedures at the group and individual level, like cumulative knowledge tests in medicine. The variety of methods for recording learning progress was also positively highlighted by students during the audit visit. The audit team recommends UEF to clearly name contact persons for students.

UEF plans to improve the feedback process by introducing systematic monitoring of study progress and by developing a study progression analysis system to identify students at risk to prevent drop-out. The SAR identifies the development of a learning analytics system as an area

for improvement. In the audit visit, it became clear that the development of a learning analytics system is on its way but is not yet at the final stage. The audit team recommends moving forward with the development.

## Students rate the quality of teaching and supervision as good, but experiences vary

The quality of teaching is rated high at UEF. This became evident during the audit visit. In the student workshops, it was emphasised that the flipped classroom approach is much appreciated. UEF supports lecturers in providing trainings for lecturers on activating and diverse teaching methods, especially flipped classroom teaching. This obviously bears fruit: students spoke of positive learning experiences, approaches to learning new things and reflecting from different perspectives, like case studies, role plays, group work, panel discussions, and competent and friendly lecturers who care. Students positively mentioned aspects such as flexibility, lack of hierarchies, approachable professors, and the possibility to choose a wide range of courses. Students reported that courses are designed to promote competence. In this context, students stated they felt that lecturers wanted them to learn rather than just pass the course. It is evident that the quality of teaching is of importance.

Another strength of the university's educational provision is that teaching at UEF is in many cases clearly related to working life. UEF offers working life days, career guidance, expert lectures on working life, internships, and final theses in companies. It is also positive that the degree structures of the international master's programmes have been expanded to include an internship component. In degree programmes with a vocational focus, like health and teacher training, there is a very good fit with professional practice. The Faculty of Science, Forestry, and Technology was also mentioned as a good example in terms of industry cooperation. As faculty members noted, it is not so easy to make a clear connection to the labour market in general degree programmes. Here it depends more on the motivation of the individual teachers and the picture is more inconsistent. The audit team recommends also expanding the vocational orientation of the general education degree programmes.

The quality of teaching and support during the COVID pandemic is rated as adequate. The students stated that flipped learning and distance learning were a great experience. Contact with the teachers during the COVID pandemic was good and easy. Other students would like to see a hybrid model with a mix of online and onsite teaching. Some students stated that distance learning detracted from the positive learning experience and that they would like to come back to campus to have more onsite teaching, especially the international students. The teaching staff also find face-to-face teaching rewarding. The audit team recommends that the UEF needs to develop a coherent teaching strategy for the ”new normal”.

There are also negative voices and indications of potential for improvement. Students would like

to see more flexibility in responding to students in difficult situations, clear and easy-to-find information, better organisation of courses and a better distribution of the workload over the semester. Students stated that there are too many different channels of information and that sometimes they do not know where to find the relevant information. In addition, students would like more comprehensive advice on the composition of their courses for their studies. For example, choosing minor subjects does not seem to be so easy for some students. For international students, the situation is more challenging because many minor courses are offered only in Finnish. The audit team recommends UEF to review the channels of information from a students' perspective.

## Student well-being needs permanent funding and support

UEF focuses its attention on student well-being and equality of students. This is seen as a strength by the audit team. However, it is also recommended that this focus be maintained for the future and that the necessary financial and human resources be found for this. UEF has renewed several of its guidelines on student well-being, including the early intervention model. During the COVID pandemic, student well-being was of particular concern. The UEF responded by recruiting five well-being coordinators in spring 2021. The university has also implemented several student well-being interventions in collaboration with the Student Union, like the Bridges I and II projects and the Student2Student operating model. Currently, three student psychologists work at UEF.

However, despite the investment during the COVID pandemic, the system is under-resourced and over-stretched. Psychologist visits are booked quickly and there are long waiting lists. Project-based funding jeopardises long-term support, like the Bridges project. The audit team finds that both additional funding for service expansion and the continuation of project-based funding are needed for the well-being of students. In addition, continuous monitoring of effectiveness and needs in a changing environment is required. Therefore, the audit team recommends that UEF should look at continuity in the provision of welfare services.

## Support and guidance for doctoral researchers needs attention

There are different measures to support doctoral researchers in their development, like training and courses from the open university. The doctoral programme coordinators also provide support and guidance. Interviews with doctoral researchers revealed near universal-praise for the dual-advisor system that was implemented. Many doctoral researchers were praised for their high-quality mentoring.

However, during the audit visit some doctoral researchers spoke of feeling insufficiently

supported. Doctoral researchers without scholarship or contract worker status reported that they are disadvantaged in terms of access to research resources and infrastructure. This lack of support for some doctoral researchers leads to a two-tier system in their view and is perceived as an injustice. It seems justified to investigate how widespread these problems are and implement appropriate solutions. Doctoral researchers who had funding reported that the recent change from 4-year funding to 2+2-year funding caused problems. This increased the pressure to publish and make significant progress in the first two years of their programme. This is especially relevant for disciplines where significant research advances require longer periods of time. The funding situation for doctoral researchers and their status at the university needs to be addressed at the university level. The creation of employment relationships with 10% of grant-funded doctoral researchers is an improvement (see Chapter 3). However, the analysis of possible measures to support all doctoral researchers with sufficient resources should be addressed in the coming years.

When the audit team asked about supporting access to Finnish or global labour markets, an incoherent picture emerged. Some doctoral researchers stated career support varies between the departments and the faculties. For international doctoral researchers career options are limited. There are some projects that focus on promoting employment. The interviewees stated that UEF is on the way, but more action is needed. The audit team shares this impression. It is strongly recommended that measures should be taken to further improve the situation of doctoral researchers. UEF could also pay more attention to international students. This issue is discussed in Chapter 4.

# 1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## Managing education through data

The university's student feedback system is described in the attached table.

| Feedback system | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Survey** | **Content** | **Implementation** | **Timing from 1st of August 2022** |
| Finnish bachelor's graduate survey | Studying and learning, teaching arrangements, degree requirements, feedback and assessment, general working life competences | National feedback survey<br><br>UEF: Student and Learning Services | Continuous |
| Career survey | Satisfaction with the degree, career as a whole, situation at the time of graduating and current situation, quality of employment, job and competence | National feedback survey<br><br>UEF: Student and Learning Services | Every year |
| Career survey aimed at doctoral graduates | Doctoral degree education, situation in the labour market and finding employment, current employment relationship and its quality, the development needs of doctoral degree education | National feedback survey<br><br>UEF: Student and Learning Services | Every year |
| Course feedback | Develop the way course is taught | UEF: Teachers | After the course |
| Guidance and counselling survey at the beginning of studies | Expectations for guidance, the implementation of guidance, and the issues for which the student sought guidance | UEF:<br>Student and Learning Services | Every two years |
| Survey on the realisation of diversity, inclusiveness and equal opportunities in studying | Accessibility of studies, equal opportunities in teaching and studying, experiences of discrimination, well-being in studies, and guidance and support for studies | UEF:<br>Student and Learning Services | Unestablished |
| Employment survey | Finding employment, quality of employment, skills, unemployment, and the assessment of teaching and studies | UEF:<br>Student and Learning Services | Every three years |
| Survey aimed at doctoral students | Doctoral degree studies and progress of studies, guidance and support,<br>financing, internationalization, visions for future, functions of doctoral school and its programmes | UEF:<br>Doctoral school | Every two years |
| Departments´, schools' and subjects´ own practices | Survey-specific content | UEF:<br>Departments, schools, subjects, Student and Learning Services | Departments´, schools' and subjects´ own practices |

Figure 6 Student feedback system

Main objective of the university's knowledge management work is to develop a repository-based

reporting and analytics environment to support the university leadership and other staff in management and the development of the university's activities. A number of different reports, for example reports about research funding and graduating students have been made to support the management of education and training. Reporting will focus on student selection during the next phase.

Subject studies have several different methods for providing feedback at the group and individual level. For example departments organise feedback days. The Academic Rector's decision on course feedback was issued on 29 March 2022. At the university level, the newly piloted course feedback system allows for counter feedback. Responding to feedback motivates people to give feedback. The new feedback tool improves these responses.

Feedback can be given anonymously. Student organisations and the Student Union have the opportunity to provide feedback, which then processed by the relevant university function in the education management system.  Feedback surveys are organised on a regular basis to encourage students to give feedback. Some university departments also have student tutoring activities and this support lowers the threshold for giving feedback.

During the Student Union's Smile and Complain Week, students have the opportunity to anonymously give feedback to the Student Union, the university, the health service, caterers, or any other party that affects student life. All feedback is forwarded to the subject of the feedback. In addition, teachers and subject studies are able to collect feedback through various methods, such as feedback sessions or other verbal feedback. Feedback responses can be given to students after a course and during a course in relation to any changes in the delivery of the course when the next course is organised.

Depending on student feedback, it is analysed at various management levels, such as Council for Teaching and Guidance, the faculties' Committee on development of degree education, the academic subject or the department in question in another agreed manner, such as separate feedback sessions. Students are involved in all aspects of the university's activities in which feedback is discussed and further measures are agreed, for example to improve content, teaching methods or practices.

The results of the national career monitoring and candidate feedback are systematically analysed by institutions and departments as a basis for teaching development.

Teaching is monitored and evaluated annually in university management reviews, based on teaching measures. In the faculties, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is carried out by the Committees on development of degree education.There are also departmental/unit-specific approaches to monitoring and evaluating teaching. More detailed monitoring and evaluation of training is carried out at the faculty and departmental level, and, for example, the needs for curriculum development emerge from these more detailed analyses. The use of feedback time series is part of the degree programme's monitoring and evaluation processes. The Council for Teaching and Guidance discusses and, if necessary, outlines the necessary measures at the

university level.

The university rectors and student services management team meet regularly with the Student Union Board and the student associations. These meetings are interactive and giving and receiving feedback is a natural part of the process. Students have representatives in various educational management levels such as faculties' and departments' education development committees/quality team to give feedback, and students are auditors in internal audits. Doctoral researchers have representatives on the Doctoral School's management team.

The extent, scope, and orientation of higher education is controlled nationally. The university has responded to the national increase in student numbers by permanently adding almost 400 places. In addition, 168 starting places were temporarily added due to the coronavirus pandemic. In autumn 2021, the university launched a speech therapy course in response to the need for speech therapists in Eastern Finland. In particular, the need to launch engineering education in Eastern Finland, driven by the needs of businesses in the region, led the university to apply for responsibility for technical and scientific education.

The university offers a wide range of specialised training courses and stand-alone studies where students can deepen their expertise.  These courses are mainly aimed at people who are working, have a university degree or equivalent qualifications.

The Centre for Continuous Learning, Open University, and continuing professional education are part of the university's educational provision. The university is the second largest provider of open university studies in Finland. Strong cooperation between upper secondary schools increases the effectiveness of the operations. In 2021, 52 upper secondary schools were cooperation partners.

University graduates (all levels) can apply for continuous learner status.

The university's support services develop its activities from the perspective of continuous improvement. Feedback from students and stakeholders is taken up in the appropriate bodies and used to improve the way we work.

| **Strengths** | **Enhancement areas** |
| --- | --- |
| Extensive provision of continuous learning, closely linked to degree programmes | Systematising the student feedback process, making use of feedback more visible |
| Students are able to have an influence through multiple channels and are involved in various committees and development work | Developing learning analytics |
| Responding quickly to society's training needs | Establishing support services for international training |
| Opportunities in the open education pathway | Developing a monitoring and evaluation model for doctoral training |
| Operational model for the continuous right to study | |

## 1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

As mentioned in the SAR, UEF collects feedback data at different levels by using different methods. There are, for example, feedback days in the departments during the student union's Smile and Complain Week. Students can give anonymous feedback to the student union, the university, the health service, the caterer, or any other party that has an impact on student life. Student feedback is analysed at different levels of management, e.g., the Teaching and Advising Council, the Faculty Course Development Committee, the academic subject, or the department. Students are involved in the decision-making bodies, which gives them the opportunity to make their voices heard. They are also involved in feedback system processes and designing feedback systems. This is confirmed in the audit interviews by the students, the teaching staff, and the deans. The deans in particular underline the assumption that there is good progress in developing a coherent quality management system regarding student feedback.

Students reported that feedback was widely collected, but experiences varied in whether they reported that their feedback was listened to. Students' experiences with feedback are predominantly positive: students stated that feedback was welcome, and that there were multiple mechanisms to provide feedback. Students sometimes saw the results of their feedback in changes to programs or courses. However, some students have the feeling that feedback was systematically ignored or clearly undesired by certain faculty members. Student representatives also mentioned that in some cases UEF is not interested in comprehensive feedback.

Feedback on feedback to students (i.e., information about changes introduced because of student feedback) is not provided regularly. As a student noted during the audit visit, this is only offered in some degree programmes. However, interviews revealed that university management is aware of this problem and working on it. Another challenge is to encourage students to give feedback. Feedback fatigue is often reported in the audit visit, but this may be due to a lack of regular feedback on feedback in the sense that those giving feedback do not recognise the value of their feedback. Feedback fatigue can also be a sign that feedback requests should be targeted and clearly valuable. Against this background the audit team views student feedback – collecting, accepting, and responding to it – as an area of development for UEF. The audit team recommends a critical evaluation of feedback strategies and procedures and the introduction of more systematic feedback on feedback.

As stated in the SAR, the university regularly monitors and evaluates the degree programmes and other education provision. Various measures are used, like employment analyses and surveys, but as some university representatives explained, it is difficult to do this in a coherent way. This also applies to the evaluation of links to working life. This is easier for programmes with a vocational focus than for more general programmes. Learning success in terms of employment is monitored, but there is room for improvement. The audit team recommends that UEF should

monitor learning outcomes and processes more systematically. A learning analytics system to analyse and support individual student learning is being discussed at the university but is not yet in place. Regarding the goal of implementing individual learning paths, the control of individual learning processes as well as the assessment of individual learning success is important.

As mentioned during the audit visit, UEF follows the approach of combining the competences of the staff with the strategic objectives of the institution. For example, UEF has combined career guidance with the help of professors from the Philosophical Faculty. The university services have their own surveys such as regular surveys on well-being. New staff and administrative personnel were recruited to address this issue. This is a good example of how staff feedback leads to change.

# 1.4 The HEI’s examples of successful enhancement activities

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## Developing multi-disciplinary pedagogies and learning environments

The university’s network of facilitators develops online and multi-modal pedagogies and tools for online and multi-modal learning. Distance/hybrid learning has been strongly developed and supported through various pilots. The Everyone Guides activities will be launched in early 2022. The development of these activities will clarify what governance means as a collaboration between different groups of actors in the university community and support the development of governance in institutions and departments. The interaction and development of the university’s educational management system is supported by the university’s network of pedagogical leaders.

The university’s online and multi-modal pedagogy facilitator network acts as a new link between teaching units/services and in national development networks. This network supports pedagogical skills and develops online and multi-modal pedagogies and tools. This has increased concrete development needs and has resulted, for example, in a starter kit for digital teacher orientations.

The university has created a Digistartti orientation package as part of the initial guidance.  The aim of the Digistartti orientation is to help students get acquainted with the university’s digital learning environments and tools even before they begin their studies. The Kamu Student Handbook provides a wealth of help, support, tips, and contact information to help students with their studies.

## Escape game pedagogy

At the heart of the escape game pedagogy is the equipped multipurpose room, which aims to introduce gamification into the teaching process and thus develop students’ collaborative problem-solving skills.  The escape game also offers unique opportunities to observe learning.

**Sm4rt LOC** The University’s first escape room was built on the Joensuu campus in cooperation with departments and schools of Teacher Education, Computing, and Applied Physics.

**FARScape** Is a pharmaceutical escape room at the Kuopio campus, suitable for teaching pharmaceutical manufacturing and analytics, where it is possible to combine theoretical and practical knowledge. The escape room is designed for a laboratory environment.

**Escape Swedish** was developed during the period in cooperation between the Language Centre and the School of Educational Science and Teacher Education. The idea of the escape room game is to develop teamwork skills and to learn and apply Swedish in solving tasks.  The game can be

played in a Sm4rt LOC lab, in a regular classroom, or online. In addition to using it on a Swedish refresher course, the escape room game can also be applied to subject-specific examination courses.

## Student well-being

The aim of student well-being work is to promote student health and study ability, the well-being of the study communities, and to prevent social exclusion.  Student well-being and its development are supported in several ways at the university, with the support of many actors, and through various services. The aim is to create a healthy, balanced, and safe learning and study environment, as well as to protect the mental health of the students through both community and individual support.

The Bridges projects support students' self-reliance and ability to cope with the problems caused by the pandemic, prevent exclusion, strengthen study skills and mental well-being, and promote progress in their studies through various support measures, cooperation between actors, and peer support for students. The project will also provide low-threshold guidance and well-being services for our students.

Student2Student peer counsellors are available by phone, and students can contact them for any questions related to student life and well-being. A peer counsellor provides peer-to-peer discussion support and signposting to the necessary services. These discussions are confidential, voluntary, and free of charge. Students can also request a call back with a peer counsellor during on-call hours. This service model has been developed as a continuation of the work done by UEF's well-being coordinators.

## Education cooperation

The university has extensive educational cooperation with various higher education institutions. The University of Eastern Finland is involved in more than 20 education networks, for example one form that cooperation is the national agreement on flexible study rights (JOO). The most extensive educational cooperation with Karelia and Savonia Universities of Applied Sciences. The university and the universities of applied sciences jointly run the studies leading to a bachelor's degree in computer science (ICT education pathway). The Doctoral Training Network collaborates on the design of generic competency courses. The Tohtos project established joint courses with other universities.

## Cooperation in pharmacy

In professional fields like pharmacy, there are compulsory traineeships for studies. The purpose of traineeship is to support the development of the pharmacist students' professional expertise and working life skills and to guide the students to adapt the skills they have received in their studies to practice. Teaching pharmacies are approved by School of Pharmacy. Besides the

traineeship the University of Eastern Finland's pharmacy in Kuopio is doing cooperation with the university at the research and development of the teaching of pharmacy, in which has been established a shared post called as teaching pharmacist. With cooperation the teaching of pharmacy is developed to meet e.g. new needs that have arisen in working life and pharmacy's service processes are developed through research.

## Continuous learning for holistic change

The university has implemented a systemic change in continuous learning, with closer, more streamlined collaboration between faculties and units and the Centre for Continuous Learning. The curricula for 2022-2025 were prepared in cooperation between the Centre for Continuous Learning, the Language Centre, and the faculties. The curricula are uniform for degree, minor, and open university students. The opportunities and options for continuous learning are clear and the teaching is of a high quality. Forecasting will be systematically used and cooperation with working life will be modelled as part of a continuous learning approach, as connections with working life and their relevance are also strengthened through this.

## Development and internationalisation of education as a member of the European Universities Initiative

As a member of the European Universities Initiative, YUFE (Young Universities for the Future of Europe), UEF students' opportunities to study in Europe have been expanded and diversified. Students can already take individual courses or volunteer at ten partner universities, either on-site or virtually. In 2023, students will already be able to complete full minors (30 credits), drawn from the offerings of partner universities, and integrate them into their degrees. A European joint degree in partner universities, the YUFE Bachelor degree, is also being planned. Students are also active members of the Initiative and contribute to its development in all areas.

# 2 HEI promotes impact and renewal

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

*The evaluation area II assesses the procedures used to manage and improve societal engagement, strengthen the impact of the HEI's research, development and innovation as well as artistic activities, and support an innovative organisational culture.*

## Based on the audit team's evaluation, evaluation area II is at the level *good*.

**The audit team identified the following key strengths and recommendations:**

**Strengths**

- UEF has a well-known strategy and fosters multidisciplinary research communities together with aligned support.
- UEF has strong regional connections. There is a lot of evidence of societal engagement and regional development. UEF actively listens to external stakeholders with ties to the university.
- UEF understands impact broadly. The recent hired a director of impact is a sign of their focus on this area.

**Recommendations**

- UEF should strengthen structures related to societal participation and the creation of partnerships, including processes for societal engagement especially with those unfamiliar with the university.
- UEF should develop a more systematic way to measure societal engagement and set goals for it. This includes setting up a clear communication plan for impact-related activities as well as a more visible alumni network. UEF should also set targets for the impact of UEF's research.
- UEF should use international networks, like Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE), more actively for development and capacity building.

# 2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## Strategy guides the management of social engagement and impact

Impact is part of the research and education activities of the University of Eastern Finland. Social engagement, interaction, and impact are achieved through high quality and effective delivery of core activities.

The Rector take the lead on the university's impact and the Academic Rector leads on the educational impact. The different forms of impact are monitored as part of the university's management system throughout the university's activities.

The effectiveness of university education is monitored through departmental indicators (student numbers, graduates, employment, credits in continuous learning). Research impact indicators comprise the number of open access publications and open data sets and the JUFO classification of the publications. The number of ecosystems of impact central to the university is also monitored.

The university actively communicates and disseminates its research and education. The university has several communication channels that reach different target groups. The university's main social media channels and followers in 2021: Twitter (10,700), Facebook (18,900), LinkedIn (38,820), Instagram (10145). The university also produces podcasts, blogs, and video content. The university monitors news coverage and visibility in online media. The media monitoring of the Meltwater service used by the university covers 3,800 Finnish and 230,000 international online media. University staff are encouraged to be active on social media channels through regular webinars and training materials.

The university regularly organises science events for the public, such as Science Cafés, Science Days, and the Researchers' Night. The *Studia Generalia* lecture series is also organised, and it is streamed and often recorded to allow interested parties to follow the event regardless of place and time.

The UEF shared doctoral student position system promotes the employability of doctoral graduates and their employment outside universities. The operating environment is analysed as a continuous process. Board meetings are used to inform and anticipate the impact of changes affecting the university's operations. The university's different bodies discuss the forecasting information in their meetings. The university is consulted by various parties, for example on matters requiring the university's expertise in different fields. This also helps the university stay up-to-date with upcoming legislative changes.

The House of Effectiveness is a multidisciplinary cooperation network for research and education on well-being and health-related effectiveness at the University of Eastern Finland. This initiative gathers evidence from effectiveness research to support the development and decision-making of well-being and health-related services and the integration of social and health services. The network also acts as a discussion and engagement forum between different parties, promoting cooperation and networking in the sector at the national and international level. The university also offers training on the effectiveness of health care and social welfare.

The university has a model for cooperation on sporting events. In addition to increasing the visibility of the university, all contracts for sporting event partnerships have included either research or educational expertise related to the event. Almost without exception, students are also involved in the concrete implementation of sporting event cooperation. The agreements also include a commitment to the principles of ethical sport.

In 2016, the University of Eastern Finland became the first Finnish university to establish an EU Office in Brussels, which enables the university's researchers and leadership to closely follow the European Union's science and innovation policy and to network and influence it in a more targeted manner.

University partnerships are part of the university's impact-making. To strengthen its impact, the university has recruited a Director of Impact (commencing 1 September 2022).

| **Strengths** | **Enhancement areas** |
| --- | --- |
| An open culture | Greater visibility, systematic monitoring, and communication of impact |
| UEF shared doctoral student position system | Identifying targets for monitoring social impact |
| Sport event cooperation | |
| House of Effectiveness | |
| UEF Connect – search service | |
| Staff activity on social media | |

# 2.1 Managing the societal engagement and impact

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

### Societal engagement is part of UEF’s strategy and organisational cultue

The audit team noticed several positive things in societal engagement and impact at the audit visit, which UEF is performing well. There is a strong focus on societal impact in UEF’s organisational culture and strategy. The rectorate leads work on the impact of the university and underlines that the university has raised societal engagement in the strategy. UEF has an overall strategy with a multidisciplinary focus and profile areas on future challenges. Four profile areas and three strategic programmes build up the strategy. The implementation of the strategy is supported by the university’s own funding.

The recently recruited director of impact is a great initiative of the university. However, this role is new and still needs further enhancement and clear objectives both internally and externally. The audit team recommends that the work of the director of impact should connect better with the academic leadership and strategic management.

The audit team notices that the indicators for societal engagement and impact are lacking, which restricts the quality system from functioning optimally on societal engagement. The university is aware of this lack, and the new director of impact is actively working to remedy this situation.

### UEF has strong focus on sustainability and multidisciplinary

The audit team was delighted to see the strong focus on sustainability of the UEF Strategy 2030. Impact is measured on how research responds to the sustainability goals of the United Nations. The response has been good on climate action, health, and well-being. There are impressive initiatives such as the mostly online bachelor programme of sustainability. There are climate goals for 2025 for both education provision and research, and in view of this, climate goals are also understood as part of the university’s goals for societal engagement. However, the audit team finds that communications on sustainability achievements and figures on outcomes are needed for an even stronger societal impact. Therefore, the audit team recommends that the achievements are communicated more clearly internally and externally. The university should also celebrate achievements of climate goals accordingly.

The UEF Strategy 2030 also focuses on a multidisciplinary approach. Based on the audit visit, multidisciplinary is well manifested through the research communities and well known throughout the university. There are structured ways of cooperation between different programmes and schools. The same applies to cooperation between the two campuses in Joensuu and Kuopio.

According to the interviews of the audit visit, there is a strong engagement of the staff to the multidisciplinary approach and strategy (see also Chapter 1.1). Multidisciplinary is supported by the funding system and staff. In the audit visit, impact was defined broadly for a multi-disciplinary university, both by the rectors and other, especially senior staff. The audit team considers this approach as a strength. The audit team encourages the university to communicate this approach in a clearer way. With a broad definition of impact, a more complex pallet of goals and indicators may be allowed, leading to even better results.

During the audit visit, it become clear that leadership is working towards goals of societal impact. However, the audit team did not observe a clear management system leading this work. To facilitate the development of societal engagement, the audit team recommends paying attention to how societal impact is manifested and measured as well as implementing clear objectives for both the societal impact and the work leading towards it. UEF should access new regional or international partnerships with stakeholder groups targeting a similar mission. It is vital to understand how the university is perceived both internally and externally, as this is an important attractiveness factor and a means also of student retention.

## UEF has a strong positive regional impact

The importance of the university in the local community was paramount in many interviewee's responses during the audit visit. From the discussion with stakeholders, it was evident that UEF has strong ties to the local community. UEF is regarded as a strategic partner and a broad spectrum of activities were addressed at the audit visit, such as extensive research collaboration, use of infrastructure, internships and visiting teachers. In vision of the Research Infrastructure Programme 2021-2024 collaboration with strategic partners is highlighted. It is obvious to the audit team that UEF recognises its role and responsibility in the local region in an excellent way.

In the interview with stakeholders, easy communication with an informal attitude and personal connections were emphasised and praised. At the same time, external stakeholders asked for more focus on implementation and regular meetings. The audit team proposes to think about more formalised and transparent paths for collaboration and partnerships. Informal connections, local networks, and the assumption the everybody knows each other is a huge strength but could exclude less-known partnership possibilities. The co-operation between local actors could thus be further systematised and fostered in a more structured way, so that it could grow into its full potential. It is also a risk that collaborations can become too dependent on personal connection. As an example given by an external stakeholder in the interview, all collaborators have close ties to the university. They reported that it was not clear how to initiate interactions and collaborations without personal connections.

A participatory approach towards the local community and enterprises creates both a strong commitment and a strong impact and is therefore a regional development issue. However, the

co-operation between local actors could be further systematised and fostered in a more structured way, so that it could grow into its full potential. The audit team thus recommends that the processes of becoming a partner could be more formalized.

A very good way of nurturing ties and a fruitful relationship with the industry in the region and beyond are UEF's so-called shared doctoral positions that allow the university and the industry to share the cost of an early-stage researcher's salary. For the doctoral researcher they are important windows to gain experience and form relations to the industry relevant to his or her research topic.

# 2.2 Research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities with impact

## - Högskolans självvärdering

### Strong Strategic Profile in Research

The university has chosen interdisciplinary, thematic research communities (RC) as our concept to pursue world-class science in our profile areas. Identified 14 strategic research communities have been evaluated in UEFRAE2019 to be of very good, excellent or outstanding quality (score 4–6/6) and cover 70% of total research activities. UEF has systematically developed research communities with PROFI funding and UEF's strategic funding. PROFI funding provided by the Academy of Finland for Finnish universities support and speed up the strategic profiling of Finnish universities. Research excellency forms strong base for valorisation of research results and impact of research activities.

Modern and easily accessible research infrastructures are systematically developed according to UEF's infrastructure programme. The infrastructures are utilized in research, education and ecosystems of collaboration with the university's partners.

### Responsible and Open Science for All

Open science and open innovations are identified as fundamental concepts in the development of the quality and impact of our research and education. A fundamental principle of the UEF Publishing and Data Policy (2015) is that research findings, research data and publications shall be openly accessible in accordance with the principles of research ethics and the legal framework. UEF has adopted the key principles of PlanS accelerating the transition to full and immediate Open Access to scientific publications with following actions: 1) All publications in scientific journals are made openly available in UEF eRepository, an open publication and data archive. UEF eRepository also publish metadata of UEF's research data. 2) Open science services include automatic open publishing in UEF eRepository, help in research data management, support to find relevant OA journals or OA archives for data. 3) Education on open science, data management and publishing. 4) UEF participates in national and international collaboration on open science actions: European design on EOSC, European Open Science Cloud, European University Association's Open Science expert group and the Science Business network on open science.

UEF follows good scientific practice in all of its actions. UEF is committed to Guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) 'Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) and Procedures for Handling Allegations of Misconduct in Finland'. Doctoral School provides course on Research Ethics for all doctoral students. The UEF Committee on Research Ethics carries out

reviews on ethics of non-medical research involving and thereby support researchers to conduct responsible science. The Ethcis Committees of UEF and Hospital District of Northern Savo work in close collaboration. The processes of handling alleged violations of the responsible conduct of research is led by the Rector according to the RCR process defined by the TENK.

## Part of Regional and Global Development

UEF actively promotes the utilisation of university-driven expertise in order to promote societal development through innovative research, business activities and entrepreneurship. UEF has a model and rules for strategic partnerships.

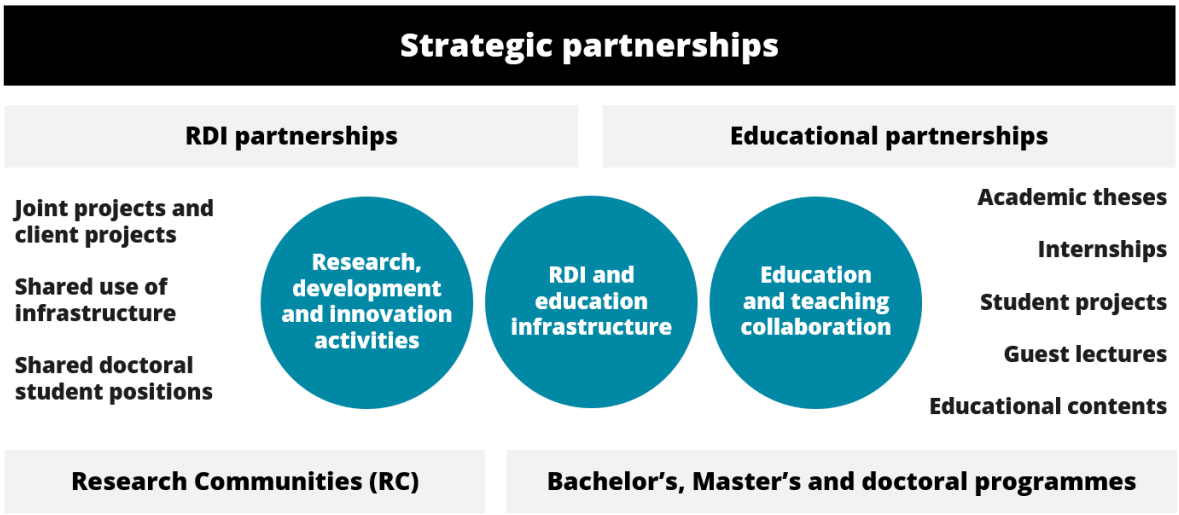



Figure 7 Strategic partnerships

UEF has established together with the partners ecosystems of impact which are supporting UEF's strategic research profile:

**KuopioHealth**. Exchange of expertise and knowhow, technology and information among people, companies and institutions in the fields of health, welfare and nutrition.

**EduEntr** collaborative educational network that gathers wide knowledge from the public institutions and private companies to ensure the provision of educational services of highest quality.

**GreenHub Innovation System**. A forest-based bioeconomy and technology network for experts, researchers, trainers, teachers and developers to solve challenges related to a company's business in collaboration with the company in question.

**Neurocenter Finland** (UEF acting as coordinator) maintains comprehensive and up-to-date information on research projects, infrastructures, methods, materials and innovations in the field of neuroscience in Finland and promote cross-boundary partnerships between academic, private and third sector actors.

**House of Effectiveness** is a multidisciplinary ecosystem of welfare and health related effectiveness in research and education.

Research projects are essential elements for active collaboration with business and third sector and dissemination of research results:

UEF is partner in four national Flagships (Finnish Flagships Programme by Academy of Finland), which are to support high-quality research and increase the economic and societal impact of research: 1) PREIN, Flagship on Photonics Research and Innovation, 2) ACCC Atmosphere and Climate Competence Center, 3) GeneCellNano Gene, Cell and Nano Therapy Competence Cluster for the Treatment of Chronic Diseases, 4) UNITE Forest-Human-Machine Interplay, Building Resilience, Redefining Value Networks and Enabling Meaningful Experiences. All the flagships have a separate impact plan and impact coordinators to enhance dissemination of research results.

UEF researchers are involved in 23 projects of the Finnish Strategic Research Council (SRC) Programmes. These projects have research and interaction plan and interaction coordinators.

Research funding services help staff members of the University of Eastern Finland in the preparation of funding proposals, help and support in the project management and, organize info sessions and training on the acquisition of external funding. The university's entrepreneurship and innovation services work with researchers to help commercialise the university's research results and knowledge.

UEF is active in science communication. UEF Communications and Media Relations support researchers in all kind of dissemination activities.

UEF Connect is a search service for partners, stakeholders, and the general public interested in research. It is easy to find information about the university's activities by searching directly in UEF Connect with a keyword or by browsing the service using keywords.  The Uef.fi website informs external audiences about science news and events. Around 800 articles are published online per year. Around 500 media releases are produced per year.

Collaborative research services for companies have been compiled on the university website.

The university organises 6-8 science cafés every year. Each year, the university participates in a number of collaborative events, which include content produced by university experts.

| Strengths | Enhancement areas |
| --- | --- |
| Clear strategic profile in research | Further development of innovation ecosystems |

| | |
|---|---|
| Strong multidisciplinary collaboration within Research Communities | Open science actions in research data and innovations |
| Well-established processes of Committee on Research Ethics | Research collaboration projects with industrial sector |
| Comprehensive support for researchers on funding, open science and dissemination of research results | Support for impact planning and activities |
| | Developing the evaluation and monitoring of research communities and the impact of evaluation results. |

# 2.2 Research, development, and innovation activities and artistic activities with impact

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

### Strategy has a strong impact on UEF activities

The UEF strategy 2030 with profile areas and strategic programmes had a real impact on UEF activities and priorities regarding the thematic research communities addressing global challenges. UEF has created thematic research communities in a successful way and there is a strong focus on multidisciplinary research. The UEF is a partner in four national flagships, and researchers are involved in 23 projects of the Finnish Strategic Research Council programmes. UEF’s strategic funding with support PROFI funding provided by the Academy of Finland are supporting the implementation of the strategy. The audit team considers the well-known strategy by the university community and multidisciplinary research communities as a strength. The strategy is implemented with aligned support. All these activities contribute to the reforming of society. Funding services within UEF seem adequate and appreciated, both as described in the SAR and based on the interviews.

UEF has established partner ecosystems aligned with the following strategic profiles: KuopioHealth, Global Education Park, GreenHub Innovation System, Prein, Neurocenter Finland, and House of Effectiveness. It is a great strength to have several partner ecosystems in different domains focusing on strategic profiles as a multidisciplinary university. In the SAR and the information provided on the UEF webpage, the ecosystems have the focus of disseminating the latest research of the university. At the same time, further development of the innovation ecosystem is listed as an enhancement area in the SAR. While doing that, the audit team encourages the university to adopt a more explicit approach to invite questions and needs from external organisations. This way the university will have a dual approach integrated in their ecosystem, not only results disseminating from the university but also questions coming into the university. This can trigger more relevant research and further enhance UEF's contribution to reforming society.

### UEF should set targets for the impact of research

Research impact has a pronounced place in UEF’s strategy and in its rhetoric and it is regarded as a strength by the audit team. UEF receives information about the impact of its research through research assessment exercises. Thematic interdisciplinary research communities (RC) as concept with action plans, appointed leaders and coordinators, have been implemented and later evaluated in UEFRAE2019. The following six criteria were assessed: (1) Research excellence and

scientific quality; (2) Research collaboration; (3) Novelty, societal relevance, and impact of research activities; (4) Operational conditions; (5) Strategic visions; (6) Implementation plan.  All criteria are suitable. The audit team commends especially criteria 3, novelty, societal relevance and impact of research activities. Social relevance and impact of research ought to be in focus more often. Impact cases, as used in the latest research evaluation, is one method to use more frequently. The audit team agrees that "developing the evaluation and monitoring of research communities and the impact of evaluation results" is an enhancement area as stated in the SAR and encourages the university to do so.

The research evaluations, UEFRA2013 and UEFRA2019, are considered good practices by the audit team. The audit team recommends the university to update the RAE webpage to include information concerning the results of the research assessment exercises and the actions taken after UEFRA2013 and UEFRA2019.

During the audit visit, different views on measures and targets of the impact of research emerged. The university leadership highlighted the number of start-up companies and patents, but it was at the same time questioned whether patents are a good indicator for impact. Another view was that the greatest impact on society happens when researchers produce excellent science and obtain new research results. Participation in the Times Higher Impact Ranking was mentioned as a way of getting information about the impact of their research. The following research impact indicators are mentioned in the SAR: the number of open access publications, open data sets, the JUFO classification of the publications and the number of innovation ecosystems.

It was stated in the interviews that no clear goals for research impact have been formulated at UEF. In the audit visit, several interviewees argued that impact has to be a broad concept for a university as diverse as UEF. The audit team supports this approach by UEF. The audit team concludes that UEF has not set targets for the impact of research. Identifying targets for monitoring societal impact is also an enhancement area mentioned in the SAR. The audit team recommends the university to be explicit with a broad definition on impact and to define targets with the assumed definition as the base.

The university gives support to staff in dissemination activities and science communication via UEF communications and media relations. It provides information regarding experts, project and cooperation partners openly and accessibly via UEF connect which is the university’s search service. Science events, such as Café Smarts and Science Forum, are organised several times a year to share evidence-based information with the public.

## UEF has systematic procedures for ensuring the responsible conduct of

## research and open science

As the SAR claims, UEF follows good scientific practice in all its actions. Also, UEF is committed to the Guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) 'Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) and Procedures for Handling Allegations of Misconduct in Finland'. The principles of research ethics are well presented on the webpage, as are the role and tasks of the UEF Committee of Research Ethics. To include a more proactive role for the Committee, like promoting training, maintaining discussion and acting as an expert organ in problematic situations, is seen as a good practice by the audit team. The doctoral school provides courses on research ethics for doctoral researchers, and they are appreciated by them. The doctoral researchers also described an active dialogue with supervisors and awareness regarding the responsible conduct of research, which the audit team praises and sees as a good practice. From interviews with students, a need of research ethics training earlier than master's level was raised. The audit team finds that it is important to include ethics and responsible conduct of research early in the education process and to continue to have an active ongoing dialogue at the departments. Even though UEF has systematic procedures for ensuring the responsible conduct of research, the audit team recommends it to ensure that more research ethics will be also included in the bachelor's and master's programs.

In the UEF Strategy 2030 openness is highlighted by the bold statement: "Science for all – a pioneer of open science and science communication". In the SAR, open science and open innovations are identified as fundamental concepts in the development of the quality and impact of research and education provision. UEF has pledged to observe national and international principles and UEF has also adopted the key principles of Plan S. The publishing and data policy (2015) of UEF defines the principles of the impact of scientific research and the principles of open science. Information regarding open science is collected and presented in an informative way on the UEF webpage. The audit team noted that staff and doctoral researchers are well acquainted with open science and the publishing and data policy of the university. Training and support are in place and offered to staff and students.

# 2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## A strategy to encourage renewal

Throughout its existence, the university has deconstructed its operating structures. The university has invested in promoting dialogue and interaction between the university's leadership, faculties and its departments, for example through departmental tours by the rectors and virtual information sessions open to the whole community. Open webinars are used as a low-threshold way to explore topics and to involve staff and students in the development of activities. The new research governance system will ensure flexible interaction between the different research actors. The education network involves all actors.

University of Eastern Finland evaluated its research activities in 2015-2018 in UEFRAE2019. The selected research communities (RCs) completed self-evaluation reports, which served as background information and evaluation material for the external evaluation panel. The panel evaluated research excellence, collaboration, impact, operational conditions, strategic visions and implementation plan and gave a numeric evaluation on current research performance, future potential and renewal and overall performance. The panel pointed out that the four grand challenges build on existing strengths, and these profile areas frame the research communities. Research community was seen as valuable concept, which the UEF may wish to develop further. The panel concludes that the RCs are most efficient when they have a a rather well-defined focus and somewhat limited scope, which allows development of an international status, shared vision and academic leadership in identifying future directions. Good leadership practices were found and sharing best practices overall would develop the research communities' activities.

The university has annual internal strategic funding available to run a range of pilots and trials to encourage collaboration between units. Funded actors will present the results of their projects in open events or webinars to ensure the dissemination of good practices generated through new initiatives. The university will annually evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic measures and, if necessary, redirect funding based on the evaluation.

Internal Proof Of Concept funding will help promote Start Up entrepreneurship.

The alumni of the University of Eastern Finland include all graduates of the University of Eastern Finland, as well as former graduates of the Universities of Kuopio and Joensuu. The university organises regular alumni events and publicises events and activities through regular alumni newsletters. The university also supports the organisation of alumni events by the units. The university monitors the development of the network's membership as part of the annual monitoring. The alumni events have been developed on the basis of feedback received. In recent years, particular attention has been paid to the offering for international alumni, for example by

organising alumni evenings in the country concerned in connection with various international visits.

Cooperation between the University of Eastern Finland, Karelia University of Applied Sciences, and Savonia University of Applied Sciences is contractually wide-ranging, including joint RDI, training and service activities. The activities are guided by a steering group of rectors. Expert groups have been established to steer and concretise these joint operations. In 2021, strategic cooperation was implemented especially in the organisation of the ICT education pathway, Social and Health Economy programmes, and support for bioeconomy, circular economy, and internationalisation in Eastern Finland. The universities have a common contract lawyer, as well as shared research facilities, and other structural cooperation. Education exports will be carried out through a network of higher education institutions in the region, making use of the expertise of all higher education institutions and creating more attractive education products and pathways suitable for education exports.

The university is involved in the DRAFT Program coordinated by Karelia University of Applied Sciences and the Business Center North Savo coordinated by Savonia University of Applied Sciences. Both aim to boost research- and knowledge-based innovation and entrepreneurship.

The university works systematically with campus cities, both in terms of student recruitment and integration into the region. The university is also an active player in campus city innovation ecosystem agreements.

The university is the coordinator of Neurocenter Finland and is an active participant in the Biocenter Finland network.

The university is a member of one of the first European university networks, which were launched in autumn 2019. Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) develops higher education with ten universities and four other partners. The university is a member of the Young European Research Universities (YERUN), Nordic Centre at Fudan University (NCF), Nordic Centre in India (NCI) and Southern African-Nordic Centre (SANORD) networks. In addition, the university's faculties and departments are members of numerous discipline-specific university networks.

The university is actively involved in research, education, and development programmes of the European Union (EU), the Nordic Council of Ministers, and other international organisations. UEF is a member of UniPID (University Partnership for International Development), a network that promotes cooperation in education and research in the Global South. The University of Eastern Finland has signed a cooperation agreement with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

The university's cooperation networks are well established and are managed and monitored as part of the university's management system. New networks often come from outside the university or, for example, from national higher education policy needs. Some of the networks are temporary.

All the university’s international networks have a designated person in charge and a coordinator. The functioning and relevance of the international networks for the university is reviewed annually, and individual networks are reviewed whenever there is a need for a new person in charge.

| Strengths | Enhancement areas |
| --- | --- |
| Strengthening an open culture | International alumni networks |
| A flat organisational structure enables a quick response to the internal change needs of the university in terms of higher education policy | Development and management of business cooperation structures |
| Internal strategic funding for development activities | Utilising the potential of networks more widely |
| UEF leadership’s virtual information sessions | |
| Cooperation between the universities of Eastern Finland and a joint steering group | |
| Systematic monitoring of networks and cooperation structures | |

# 2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

### UEF has a low-threshold organisational culture

UEF's very low-threshold organisational culture was mentioned in almost every interview. This is an asset while fostering an open and transparent, innovative, and creative atmosphere. During the audit visit, several references were made to the university's working environment as being informal and easily accessible.

The university has many examples of good practices to spread both within and outside the university. The audit team encourages UEF to strengthen the culture of praising success and be prouder of its achievements. At the same time, it should allow doing more perhaps even failed experiments and learning from them. UEF has annual internal strategic funding available to run a range of pilots and trials to encourage collaboration between units. This is a good practice which the audit team values. However, the audit team recommends to ensure that the university also have more formal procedures and processes in place for innovation, ideas, and suggestions.

Even though UEF organizes several events and activities for alumni, the representatives of the student union and international students were not aware of any alumni activity. There is a huge unused potential in local, national, and global alumni networks, businesses, and industry. The audit team recommends the UEF to make the alumni network known to all present students. They should have an alumni package for graduated students. UEF could also build an international alumni network for graduates with international backgrounds. Alumni can be role models for current students.

The potential of local alumni in business cooperation is a good tool to bring in working-life expertise or subject-related specialists to existing programs and courses. A more structured way of cooperation might lead into a more measurable result. This is a regional development, attractiveness, and retention issue, especially for international students.

### Systematic collaboration with different networks would support enhancement

Local and regional networks were mentioned several times also in terms of keeping the region alive and vivid. The audit team sees that UEF should have an active role in creating, maintaining, and participating in those networks. All UEF's international networks have a designated person in charge of it as well as a coordinator. Also, local and national networks and partnerships should be almost as important to UEF than international networks.

The audit team finds that the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) is promising network and a great opportunity for UEF. The YUFE network offers opportunities for joint degrees, staff training, and different kinds of international benchmarking. It also offers a stronger voice on the European arena together with environmental analysis. The YUFE ought to be used in an optimal way. It could be a good practice to use encouragement as a catalyst for change.

International networks were mentioned widely by interviewees, but some of them were also based on personal contacts. The audit team recommends using international, national, and local networks more systematically and in an enhancement oriented way. The university should also think how to manage the existing networks better, whether a system or tool is needed for that and how it could update local, national, and international stakeholder relations and collaboration networks in a more innovative way.

# 2.4 The HEI’s examples of successful enhancement activities

## - Högskolans självvärdering

### Strengthening the university’s interdisciplinary research communities

The university has systematically developed the conditions for interdisciplinary research and supported its development both structurally and through internal strategic funding. The University has 14 thematic, interdisciplinary Research Communities (RCs), whose research is international, of the highest scientific quality, and generates interdisciplinary research knowledge and solutions to global challenges in the university’s profile areas. All the university’s RCs have drawn up action plans. The RCs have a designated leader and coordinator, and coordination groups have been set up to coordinate their activities. Community approaches are key to PROFI activities.

### A sustainable and responsible university

The UEF 2030 strategy Seizing a sustainable future is based on global challenges to which we seek solutions in our profile areas through multidisciplinary research and education, thus building a responsible and sustainable future. Our work is guided by ethicality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have been implemented in both research and teaching.

The university’s efforts to achieve the SDGs are twofold. As a scientific community, the university’s education is based on research and evidence-based information and the impact these have on society. As a work community, the university’s day-to-day operations support the achievement of the SDGs. We develop the university campuses and operations with the aim of minimising their impact on the environment.

The research and teaching content on sustainability and responsibility emphasises not only ecological sustainability but also the two other dimensions of sustainable development, namely socio-cultural and economic sustainability. The university has strong national and international expertise in climate research, for example, relating to health and climate change and environmental law. The UEF’s strong focus on sustainability and responsibility shows widely in university’s education, for example in the School of Forest Sciences and the Department of Environmental and Biological Sciences. The university is also involved in virtual universities, such as the Climate University , and education networks such as Biodiversity.

The university is committed to taking action to mitigate the effects of climate change with the goal of the university becoming carbon neutral by 2025.  The ’Eight Steps to the Future – Sustainability and Responsibility Action Plan 2022-2025’ brings together the university’s

sustainability and responsibility activities, knowledge, and practical measures to achieve the goal. The first goal of the project was to assess the university's total carbon footprint in 2020. University has also compiled Sustainable Development Report built around the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The reports are published on the university's website.

Creating real sustainability and responsibility requires the involvement and practical action of the whole university community. For example, the university uses 100% renewable electricity, offers a tax-free commuter bike benefit to its employees, provides campus gardening on its campuses to improve well-being at work, and takes sustainability and responsibility into account when tendering for university services. The university works closely with regional actors and our partners, such as Suomen Yliopistokiinteistöt and the restaurant service provider, are strongly involved in promoting our sustainability goals with us.

The University Sustainability and Responsibility Group coordinates and develops UEF's sustainability and responsibility activities, and acts as a link to the university community through its members.

## UEF shared doctoral student position system

The university was the first Finnish higher education institution to introduce the shared doctoral student position system at university level in all its doctoral programmes in 2020.

The aim of the shared doctoral student position system is to ensure that the expertise of doctoral graduates from the University of Eastern Finland is more widely utilised in business and industry and elsewhere in society. This form of funding will promote the employment of doctoral graduates outside universities.

Through the system, doctoral researchers work full-time on their doctoral thesis, with the employment relationship split half between the university and the other employer. The second employer could be a company, an organisation, a research institute, a municipality, or another public sector body. The university and the second employer fund the employment of the doctoral researcher, who is hired on an equal share basis.

## UEF leadership's information sessions

The university's leadership holds UEF virtual information sessions, open to the whole university community, 4-5 times a year. The information sessions are delivered online, ensuring broad participation. During the information sessions, the Rector, the Academic Rector, and the Director of Administration talk about the university's current affairs and a variety of themes. Topics covered in the information sessions have included the measures and effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the university's finances, educational expansion, the university's strategic programmes, the effects of the war in Ukraine, and campus development. Participants in the information sessions have the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the discussion via

an electronic discussion platform. UEF’s virtual information sessions have received a lot of positive feedback from across the university community.

# 3 HEI enhances quality and well-being

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

*The evaluation area III assesses the functioning and development of the quality system and how the system is used in strategic management. The procedures used to support the competence development and well-being of the staff are also assessed.*

## Based on the audit team’s evaluation, evaluation area III is at the level *good*.

**The audit team identified the following key strengths and recommendations:**

**Strengths**

- UEF staff recognizes the connection of their own work to the goals and strategy of UEF. UEF works in a quality manner: evaluating practices with data and using those evaluations to drive future practices.
- The quality system is distributed and integrated in nature, and it facilitates engagement by a wide variety of the university community.
- UEF supports staff competence development and well-being, including the recent possibility for grant-funded doctoral researchers to sign a 10% contract to promote their integration into the organization.

**Recommendations**

- UEF should strengthen the operations of the quality group. The quality group should meet more often and be more involved in facilitating quality work at the university.
- UEF should make quality work more visible, including developing strategic indicators supporting the profile of the university.
- UEF should continue work towards improving diversity at the university and evaluate the university's recruitment and hiring processes.

# 3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## Basis and procedures for quality management

Quality at the University of Eastern Finland refers to the appropriateness of the university's activities to achieve a high level of quality and impact in education and research.  Quality work and continuous development are an integral part of strategic management and the university's activities.

The Quality Policy is the university's policy on the objectives, principles, and responsibilities for quality.

The UEF Board is responsible for the university's quality principles and policies. The Leadership Group acts as the university's quality management team and the Rectors are responsible for quality work in line with their own division of labour. Deans of faculties, heads of departments and units, and heads of university services are responsible for the performance and quality of their own functions.

The university's Quality Group is responsible for developing and guiding the practical quality work. The university's quality coordinators and people in charge of quality in the faculties and units work together with staff and students on day-to-day quality work.

The university has long collaborated in quality work with other national and international universities (YUFE) and campus cities, for example through various quality-related projects.

A quality university culture means a university community atmosphere that supports quality.  A culture of quality is reflected in the commitment of staff and students to their work and studies, working together in accordance with the values and objectives of the university, and following common practices. Based on feedback from customers and continuous evaluation, the activities are developed and good practices are effectively disseminated within the university.

The development of the university's activities is based on the systematic use and analysis of various indicators and feedback systems describing activities and results, as well as on audits and other evaluations of activities. Quality management is a way of ensuring that the university's practices are appropriate, justified, and managed.

The university's activities and development are based on the principle of continuous development
**Plan** – **Do – Check –Act/Improve**.




Figure 8 High-quality activities at UEF

## Quality management as part of leadership

One of the overarching themes of the university's strategy is continuous development.

The purpose of strategic management and operational management is to implement the university's strategy and processes and to improve their quality, as well as ensuring that the university's activities are proactive and based on continuous analysis of the operating environment. Quality management is an essential part of strategic management. The quality system ensures that the university's strategic objectives are met. Quality work supports the achievement of the strategic objectives of the vision defined in the university's strategy and the continuous development of its activities. Leadership Group work is integrated into the university's planning, development, and reporting processes.

The university's management system and organisation have been reformed, for example by clarifying the division of responsibilities within the deanery. In addition to a dean, the faculties have deputy deans for teaching and research, the units have appointed persons responsible for teaching and research, and the division of responsibilities between faculties and departments has been clarified. Strengthening the management system will enable more systematic monitoring of the quality of operations and addressing areas for improvement.

The university's key functions are integrated into the management system. The Deans lead the Faculty Councils and the Academic Rector leads the Council of Teaching and Guidance. The heads of the independent and service institutions are involved in various bodies.

Knowledge management has been improved by developing strategic indicators and their monitoring through the introduction of new monitoring tools. Quality management has been better linked to strategic management through the development of the management review and internal audit processes, and management has been actively involved in their development. The link between strategic and operational management and quality management is described in more detail in the following image.

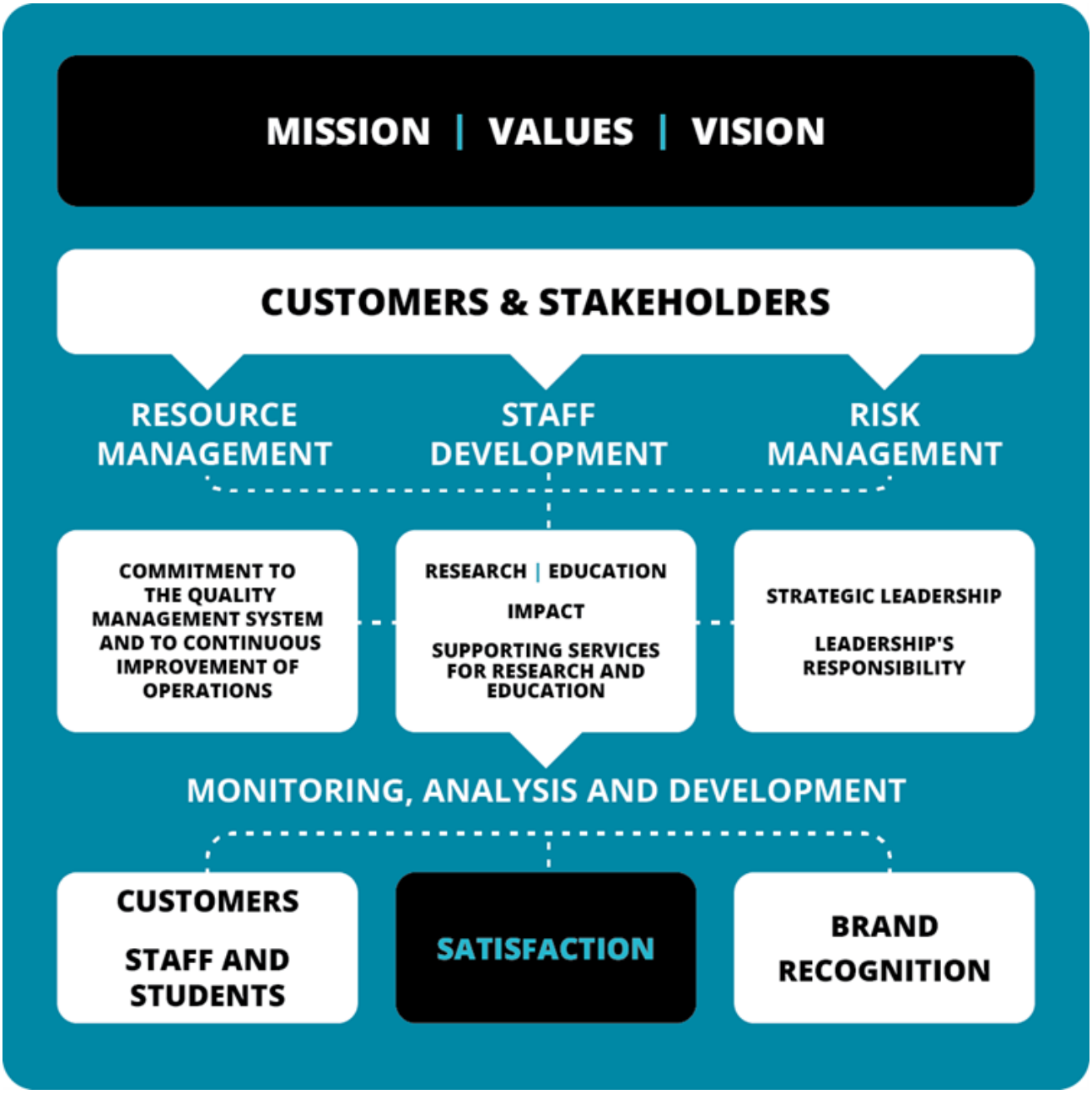


Figure 9 Strategic leadership, performance management and quality

The Quality Group includes staff representation from faculties and departments and student representation from the Student Union. Students are involved in quality management in various institutions and development projects. The university’s management meets regularly with the Student Union and student associations. Doctoral researchers have representatives on the

Doctoral School’s management team. Students and post-doctoral researchers have the opportunity to provide feedback on activities and processes through a variety of channels.

University services carry out a service survey approximately every two years. The feedback from the survey is used to develop activities. For example, in the 2022 survey, the majority of feedback was about the findability of information in both the Heimo Services and Yammer. Based on feedback, a Yammer newsletter was piloted during spring 2022 to find relevant information in the Current News and Students groups.

| Strengths | Enhancement areas |
| --- | --- |
| Quality management is part of the university’s strategic management and governance | Developing strategic indicators and reporting on quality and risk management to support strategic management |
| Developing management reviews and internal audits to support management, and the university’s leadership has actively participated in their development | Closer integration of quality management documentation with other documentation of the university’s activities (knowledge management) |
| A network of quality managers and quality actors at different levels with clear responsibilities and tasks. Information flows quickly from one level to another. | Making quality work more visible, what it means in everyday life for both staff and students, including through the development of communication about quality work and better dissemination of good practice. |

# 3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

## Quality management is an essential part of UEF’s strategic management

UEF’s quality system functions with a well-documented, thoughtful procedure for planning and decision making in place. The UEF quality policy is described with key principles and published on the UEF intranet and its public web pages both in Finnish and English. The idea of UEF as an organization that works in a quality manner, evaluating practices with data and using those evaluations to drive future practices, was evident across multiple units through different interviews. The UEF board is responsible for the university’s quality principles and policies.

Based on the interviews, university staff recognize the connection of their own work with the goals and strategy of UEF. The audit team heard several times of staff knowing the strategic goals and how they are related to their work. All interviewed groups were able to discuss the university strategy, which was very impressive.

The audit team considers it to be a strength that UEF has based the development of the quality system on feedback from the previous FINEEC audit (2016) together with the university’s own development needs. A positive view emerged from the SAR and interviews on how the university included feedback into the quality management system. One example is how UEF reformed the quality organisation to reflect the current organisation, and another is the steps to streamlining the quality system. The quality system being based on plan-do-check-act/improve cycle to ensure continuous development is a well-functioning model for a university's quality management system. The audit team recognizes the enhancement activities listed in the SAR as strengths, and in the interviews a picture of visible leadership that was engaged with the university environment emerged.

UEF’s integrated quality management model shows that quality management is an essential part of strategic management at all levels within the university. The quality system is not run as a top-down structure, but instead integrated into the structure of the university. Each level of the organization has staff that recognizes their responsibilities for quality work in their area. At UEF, the integration of quality management into the whole organization was emphasized, and the audit team considers this structure a strength. At the same time, it was shared in interviews that quality work could be made more visible. For example, the university could more often describe how the loop is closed in the plan-do-check-act/improve cycle. In particular, the part “improve” of the loop could be made more visible. This way the staff, students, and external stakeholders could see that quality work has an effect on making changes. The audit team thus encourages UEF to make quality work related to quality assurance more visible, including its results and usage in improvement.

Leaders from the rectorate to departments use both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate core activities and make data-based decisions in a knowledge-management informed framework. This work is largely performed independently within each unit but is guided at the university level through the quality group. Given the distributed nature of the quality system, having a group that can facilitate coordination and perform quality assurance work on quality analyses is important. The quality group is composed of the people responsible for quality work in units across campus. The role and responsibility of the quality group will be further discussed in section 3.3.

## The quality system supports the implementation of UEF's strategy

With a well-known strategy and a strong will and engagement for its implementation, a solid basis is formed for a more strategic approach for the university to steer and guide the university towards its vision. The audit visit observed that a culture among staff and students striving for quality permeates the organization. Internal audits with strong leadership engagement were cited as being useful for quality work and linked to strategic management. Individuals were able to cite examples of using data, often a mix of qualitative and quantitative, to make decisions and strive for quality. While data is used by people in charge of quality in the faculties and units, more systematic use of strategic indicators, either quantitative or qualitative, would ensure a more effective implementation of the strategy and facilitate the university community moving in a common direction.

To expand on the recommendation to make quality work more visible, the audit team recommends developing strategic indicators supporting the profile of the university and using these indicators in strategic management – an idea already mentioned in the SAR as an enhancement area. These strategic indicators will need to be carefully crafted to support the multidisciplinary approach and varied units of the university. The audit team suggests that the indicators should be collaboratively developed so they will be better accepted by the university community and more widely known.

# 3.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff

## - Högskolans självvärdering

### The university supports staff well-being at work

Physical, mental, and social capacity for work and activity is supported in a variety of ways. The university has a multi-site working model, which means that people can work flexibly on campus and remotely. A common policy on multi-site working aims to ensure successful and recovery-friendly multi-site working. A range of online materials and training courses on well-being at work are offered to support job retention. Staff well-being is monitored every two years through well-being surveys and, if necessary, pulse surveys. In spring 2022, an interaction and collaboration survey was carried out among the university services staff to find out their experiences of interaction and collaboration in the university community.

The progress and well-being of doctoral researchers is monitored through a biennial survey. The results of the surveys are used to plan and develop activities.

Staff well-being is supported by comprehensive occupational health care and an early support model. The skills of supervisors in dealing with different work capacity management situations are developed through regular training. Workplace surveys are carried out every five years to take a broad picture of the state of each unit and to support its operations and development work. The University Sport services Sykettä offers a wide range of physical activity services for both students and employees.

### Diversity, inclusion, and equality at the University of Eastern Finland

Making visible and strengthening the diversity of its staff and students is a strategic goal of the University of Eastern Finland. In a diverse, inclusive and equal workplace community, everyone can work, study, and participate as themselves, openly express new ideas, and contribute to the success of the university.

The current state of staff and student diversity has been mapped through various surveys and statistical data. In 2022, diversity will be a central theme in training and events for university staff. The topic is also addressed in training sessions for management and supervisors.  By the end of 2022, the university’s renewed Equality and Equal Opportunities Plan will include more specific objectives and measures to promote the above objectives. Diversity is linked to the university’s sustainability and responsibility agenda and to the accessibility of higher education.

As of June 2021, researchers with grants have had the opportunity to enter into a part-time

employment relationship (10%) with the university, improving their status and guaranteeing them access to the benefits normally covered by the employment relationship, as well as allowing them to become more closely involved in the university community. There is also a common title for doctoral researchers.

## Ensuring transparency and justification in recruitments

Strategic human resources planning provides a vision for expertise and recruitment needs over the next three years. Human resources planning is also used to implement strategy and renew operations.

The transparency of the recruitment process and the justification for the candidate selection are verified at different stages of the process. The recruitment process is carried out in cooperation with Human Resources Services and the recruitment decision is always made in accordance with the competence of the university as an employer.

A vacancy notice will be published for open applications (internal or external). Furthermore, in the case of direct recruitment, the job to be filled must be documented with the job title, job description, and other key information about the employment relationship.  Vacant positions are published in the electronic recruitment system (SaimaRekry), on the university's website and LinkedIn pages, and on other electronic application channels relevant to the position.

The stages of the recruitment assessment and selection process are documented. A written merit or reference report is prepared for applicants, which includes an assessment of the applicants and the recruitment process described in an appropriate manner. Employment contracts are prepared in writing. The publicity of recruitment documents is determined by legislation and the documents are archived in accordance with the university's information management plan.

The career development of teachers and researchers is based on the guidelines and nomenclature of the national four-tier career model.  In addition, the university's tenure track offers the best researchers an accelerated and personalised route to scientific career progression. Tenure track positions are always recruited in line with the strategic human resources planning of the faculties and departments. The university's current career model is being worked on to develop new models for the career development and skills development of teaching, research, and other staff. The aim is to enable staff to focus on tasks that match their expertise at different stages of their career. UEF's career modelling work will be linked to the preparation of reforms related to the EU's research assessment and the development of research careers. The university has been recognised by the European Commission for HR Excellence in Research for its long-term HRS4R development work.  During 2022, the university will develop its activities to ensure the continued use of the logo. UEF is also committed to the DORA Declaration.

## Expertise development

Expertise development needs are identified through, for example, development and appraisal interviews, well-being at work surveys, and workplace surveys. A report on the expertise needs identified in the annual development discussions is drawn up and used to plan staff training. The planning process is supported by a working group on skills development, with a wide range of scientific and administrative disciplines represented. Staff expertise is strengthened by offering a wide range of free training in Finnish and English. The findability of staff training provision has been improved by centralising all training provision in the university's common training calendar . The university will also offer more flexible ways of training (self-paced and instructor-led online and distance learning) and increase the number of courses offered in English, including management training.

The university has started to define competencies that describe the development of the expertise profiles of all staff. The focus is on strengthening expertise. The employee must have the basic knowledge and skills to work effectively and efficiently in a university environment with others, using time- and task-appropriate working methods and acquiring information. Cooperation in education and training takes place at the local, national, and European levels. UEF is part of the European consortium of YUFE universities, which develops common guidelines for the development of staff expertise. Staff have had the opportunity to participate in staff training provided by the YUFE universities.

UEF service design training has been piloted as training for managers of University Services and independent and service institutions.

| Strengths | Enhancement areas |
| --- | --- |
| 10% employment contract for grant researchers | Career models |
| Strategic Human Resources Plan | Transparency of work plans and objectives for teaching and research staff |
| Diverse services for work ability and well-being at work | Career and well-being services for doctoral researchers |
| Workplace surveys to support the operation and development of the units | Reform of recruitment practices and the recruitment system |
| Expertise development opportunities and management training | Diversity work |
| Knowledge management | Developing human resources and management indicators and monitoring progress |

# 3.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

### Staff competence development has copious offerings

Staff competence development at UEF is a clear strength of the university. The UEF does have procedures to identify development needs regarding staff competence. Both regular surveys and other qualitative techniques, like discussions among staff and management, were identified by the audit team. In the interviews and workshops, staff reported that they get the training they need. Students shared the opinion that teaching staff are adopting new techniques. UEF appeared to have the overall view that continual development is important. The academic rector was repeatedly cited by teaching staff as encouraging innovative practices and continuous development.

Interviewed staff and workshop participants indicated that the problem is not the lack of training opportunities, but the lack of time to participate in trainings. Thus, the audit team recommends that management ensures staff have sufficient time and mental space available to participate in competence development activities. Additionally, staff should be encouraged to recognize the value of continuous development.

Many mechanisms for staff development were identified as being in place and actively functioning. Courses targeted to international staff, training on digital tools, pedagogical training, development days, and many other mechanisms are available. However, many of the discussed mechanisms for the development of staff competence were focused on formal trainings. Competence development encompasses far more than simply formally offered trainings. Formal recognition of the value of such informal mechanisms and encouragement to develop such mechanisms could lead to further enhancement of staff competence development at UEF.

As mentioned in the audit visit, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of staff training courses. UEF uses internal surveys, but it remains unclear how the results of the various surveys are translated into development. Continual evaluation of UEF’s competence development systems is critical to ensuring that staff can develop to become professional experts in their disciplines in addition to research achievements. The audit team encourages the university to implement processes to ensure that this happens, including analyses of quantitative and qualitative datasets on staff development opportunities and outcomes.

Doctoral researchers with grants recently gained the opportunity to enter a part-time (10%) employment relationship with the university. This enhanced their status and guaranteed them access to the benefits normally covered by an employment relationship. The 10% relationship

allows them to become more involved in the university community. This is a good initiative for UEF to promote the integration of doctoral researchers with grants.

The university needs to make sure that all groups affiliated with the university get the opportunity to participate in competence development to further their career opportunities. UEF recently noted that grant funded doctoral researchers lacked access to competence development. The audit team considers the attention to this problem as a strength. The university should continue this work and ensure that there are no other groups similarly lacking access to competence development. While there were multiple competence development offerings targeted to international researchers, there is still a need to enhance the offerings for international staff. This topic is further discussed in chapter 4.

## UEF has fluently functioning basic procedures of staff recruitment

The university carries out strategic human resources planning with a three-year horizon that includes annual updates. The university has protocols in place to encourage transparent, fair hiring. Based on interviews and the SAR, it was reported that all job ads are posted publicly, job duties are listed in the job ad, hiring committees are formed before applicants are known, criteria for the candidates are set early in the hiring process, and applicants are evaluated on their qualifications.

Good basic protocols are in place. It does not appear that sufficient effort is being put into mediating or negating the potential bias of reviewers, and only few mechanisms for addressing equity issues related to hiring were discussed. While eliminating bias and addressing equity in hiring is extremely challenging, the audit team recommends working towards creating the most equitable, fair hiring process possible. For example, based on interviews, it was determined that personally identifying information such as applicant names are visible to internal reviewers. It is highly likely that reviewers can identify gender, country of origin, age, and other characteristics that have documented histories of eliciting both conscious and unconscious bias in hiring.

One potential way UEF could address this recommendation would be to create a multidisciplinary team with the purpose of evaluating existing hiring practices and recommending revisions to hiring practices through a lens of diversity, inclusion, and equity. This team could review published research on the topic, study the hiring processes of other organizations, collect and analyse internal data regarding hiring practices, engage in both intra- and extra-organizational discussions, and eventually form recommendations for future practices at the university. When undertaking analyses and actions such as these, it is important to ensure that a complex, nuanced understanding of diversity is used that includes multiple intersecting axes, such as gender, country-of-origin, ethnic heritage, age, internal vs. external candidate status, and more.

## Staff well-being is actively promoted

There are many procedures in place to evaluate and support staff well-being at UEF. Staff reported that there was strong well-being support, as well as a low threshold to communicate with others in the organization. Managers, while a group that expressed concerns about their own well-being, clearly appeared to care for the wellbeing of those they supervised and worked to ensure their staff were supported through different formal and informal mechanisms. UEF efforts at fostering well-being during the COVID pandemic were cited as positive examples of the university proactively working in this area. Many efforts were discussed, such as encouraging active transportation (e.g., bicycling) to work, allowing multi-location work, UEF festivals, sport services, occupational health care, exercise and culture benefits, and well-being groups in each unit.

However, when asked about data collection on well-being, evaluation was left up to quantitative surveys every two years. The copious informal well-being data being collected by leaders across the university appeared to be under-appreciated and under-utilized as a source of information on workplace well-being. The audit team recommends reconsidering well-being evaluation processes, both increasing the frequency as well as exploring mechanisms that could harness the existing informal well-being evaluation mechanisms already used by leaders.

## Progress has been made in diversity and equity, but much more could be done

Non-discrimination and inclusion are present and widely discussed at UEF as a goal. Work related to diversity has already started, staff know that diversity and inclusion is an area that needs work, and existing work and trainings were cited as useful by many staff in interviews. However, the audit team recommends that improvements regarding diversity should be a continual focus of the university for the foreseeable future.

The standard of equality (treating all groups identically regardless of background) appears to be the commonly held view regarding diversity among many staff and was nearly universally espoused as a value. However, substantive equality, the idea that treating everybody the same does not always guarantee equality, did not appear to be widely endorsed (though there were multiple notable exceptions in the interviews). Certain situations may warrant an equity-based approach, such as those involving international staff and minority groups. The audit team recommends that UEF explore evaluating whether an equity-based mindset would lead to better outcomes. Discussions on this topic will continue in chapter 4.

UEF’s theme of diversity in 2020-2022 is laudable. It was discussed in multiple interviews that the university was working towards revised processes and procedures regarding diversity. However, few concrete results of the process were shared with the audit team. It is unclear what the results

of this annual theme will be. The recent KOTAMO-publication may be of great value as a resource and call to action for UEF as they continue to work on the issue.

# 3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## Developing a quality system

The university's quality system has been developed based on the university's own development needs and feedback from internal and external audits. For example development recommendations from previous FINEEC audit in 2016 have been taken into account in development work. The separate quality manuals for different organisational levels have been abandoned and replaced by a university-level description of the overall quality management system, supplemented by process descriptions and operational guidelines. The quality organisation has been reformed to reflect the current organisation and responsibilities, and tasks have been clarified.

The Steering Group, composed of representatives of the different units from the previous audit, was found to be a good coordinating body for quality work and continued its work as the Quality Group, whose task is to steer and develop the university's quality work. The Group is made up of representatives from faculties, units, and the Student Union. Quality issues are regularly discussed in faculty and unit management groups and quality groups/teams. Meetings of the university's people in charge of quality in units are held at regular intervals to inform the units and vice versa about current quality issues discussed in the university Quality Group.

The processes and implementation model for internal audits and management reviews have been developed with a focus on continuous development. The aim is for management reviews and internal audits to be a genuine support to leadership (knowledge management). In addition to quality management, the internal audits examine the units' own areas for development. Audits can also include university-level themes. Diversity has been a university-level theme for 2020-2022. Audit findings are discussed in faculty and unit management groups and staff meetings, and they are also taken into account in the development of activities.

To integrate quality and risk management more closely into strategic and knowledge management, monitoring indicators and reporting will be developed. The university's feedback systems have been developed to increase feedback. The feedback received is processed, for example, in management reviews.

To disseminate good practices, the university participates in benchmarking activities in national and international networks. Benchmarking events on different themes are also organised within the university. The current themes, for example in 2021, as the number of online and distance education increased because of the coronavirus, a benchmarking webinar was held on the topic 'Quality and good practices in online education', in which good practices in online education in faculties and units were presented. In 2022 university has focused on working life cooperation

with the theme ’UEF’s recipes for working life and entrepreneurship skills’, which presented good practices from departments and student organisations on the topics of ‘Subject associations and working life – peer tools and sparring’, ‘Institutions and developing working life skills’, and ‘Tools for the productisation of expertise and entrepreneurship’. The webinars were summarised and their presentations are available to university staff. In the future, the good practices highlighted in the benchmarking events will also be compiled on the Quality Management pages of the staff intranet.

In particular, during the coronavirus period, effective Yammer and Teams groups were formed within the university to share knowledge, peer support and good practice on different topics such as teaching. This also supports a sense of community.

The university implemented a benchlearning process in partnership with the University of Jyväskylä on the theme of Continuous Learning and Stakeholder Collaboration. During the visits, a wide-ranging exchange of views, experiences, and good practices were shared on the chosen theme.  Benchlearning was seen as a good way to go deeper than benchmarking, to share knowledge, and to learn from the good practices of other organisations.

The YUFE project develops and shares common approaches between the participating universities. UEF co-leads Work Package 2 Quality Plan. For example this WP has planned quality measures for upcoming YUFE Minors.

## A quality system to support the core tasks

The university’s quality system is based on sound organisation, management and decision-making. The quality system is built on the strategy, the strategic programmes based on it, and the defined profile areas for research and education. The objectives of research, education, and social impact are set out in the strategic programmes. The university’s quality system supports the achievement of these objectives.

The university monitors the implementation of the strategy through key performance indicators derived from the strategy, which also serve as indicators for quality management. The university also monitors national common indicators for universities and its position in international rankings.

Quality management assessment procedures are widely used and assessments, audits and feedback systems are linked to the university’s strategic management and governance.

## Inclusive quality culture

The university’s quality management procedures have made more staff and students feel involved and improved awareness of quality work. The Quality Group’s role in guiding and supporting practical quality work and its development has extended the scope of quality work to the university level, partly due to its broad composition from faculties, units, and students. The

culture has changed to a more collaborative and interdepartmental approach, also in terms of quality. Staff and students are involved in institutional and performance development groups and participate in internal audits as internal auditors, and as interviewees in audits.

## Stakeholder participation in quality work

UEF key partners are the cities that our campuses are located in, state research institutes, Kuopio University Hospital, universities of applied sciences, business and industry. Experts of our university participate, together with stakeholders, in the work of various working groups and in the generation of knowledge needed to support decision-making in society. The university promotes and supports broad-based innovation activities and the emergence of business activities especially in Eastern Finland. Cooperation with stakeholders also takes place in various projects relating to education and R&D projects. Studies in several of the university's academic subjects include practical working life training.

Representatives of stakeholders participate in the planning, evaluation and development of the activities of the university's units. Stakeholders are represented in, for example, the university's Board and the University Collegiate Body and in various planning, steering and management groups. Experts representing business, industry and the public sector, as well as the university's alumni, are made use of as experts and trainers.

| Strengths | Enhancement areas |
| --- | --- |
| Management is committed to quality work and its development, and there is a wide range of quality expertise in the services | Developing the use of quality work in immediate supervision |
| An active and functioning Quality Group, which guides the university's quality work and its development, with a broad representation of the university's faculties, departments and student union | Allocating sufficient resources to quality work in the units alongside other work |
| Quality management assessment procedures are widely used and assessments, audits, and feedback systems are linked to the university's strategic management and governance | Expertise and knowledge transfer when staff change or retire |

# 3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

### UEF’s quality system is participatory and open

The quality culture at UEF is participatory and open, and it is a clear strength of the university. The audit team observed that the quality system functions as a distributed network of individuals. People in charge of quality are located across the university in a diversity of units, integrated into the leadership of each unit, and coordinated via representatives who meet as the quality group. The audit team considers the distributed and integrated nature of the quality system as a strength, as it facilitates engagement by a wide variety of the university community.

Staff, students, and external stakeholders participated in the quality system in a purposeful manner. However, some interviews revealed that there were concerns about how external stakeholders who lacked personal connections to staff at the university could be engaged in the quality system. The audit team suggests both maintaining the current quality system's distributed organizational system while enhancing the ability of external stakeholders to participate in relevant aspects of university operations.

### The quality system is in place, but could be improved with increased coordination

The distributed nature of the quality system allows for the system to recognize and adapt to the context-dependent nature of quality work. However, this distributed nature of the quality system runs the risk of having widely divergent standards, applications, and indications. This were observed during the audit visit.

The operation of UEF's quality system could be improved by collecting experiences, identifying common problems, and sharing more good practices. The system should also recognize the diverse nature of the units of the university and work to ensure that there is minimum common standard of practice for all units. The quality group seems like the optimal team at university to take on this call to action. It works as the central meeting point for people in charge of quality in the faculties and other units. The audit team recommends that the operations of the quality group should be strengthened, they meet more often, and be more involved in facilitating quality work at the university. The quality team could also implement internal and external benchlearning activities by utilizing UEF's existing networks, such as the YUFE network. The quality group could also assist with planning and analysis at the organizational level, which considers UEF’s qualitative and quantitative indicators. The audit team recommends that

leadership consider expanding the quality group's role in university strategic planning as well.

The intent of these recommendations is to help the organization further build and enhance its quality system, not convert it to a centralized system strictly controlled by a particular group. The audit team feels that if these recommendations are implemented, the quality system will be better structured to facilitate the development and success of the university in this ever-changing, unpredictable world.

# 3.4 The HEI’s examples of successful enhancement activities

## - Högskolans självvärdering

### Promoting multidisciplinarity, cross-sectorality, and pluralism in the university community

The university has invested in promoting dialogue and interaction between the university’s leadership, faculties and its departments, for example through departmental tours by the rectors and virtual information sessions open to the whole community.

The university is currently working on a wide-ranging diversity programme, with the aim of making diversity more visible, and developing measures to strengthen diversity, inclusion, and equality.

The university’s career model work has looked extensively at career progression opportunities and identified areas for development to support different career stages.

### Part-time employment of grant researchers

As of June 2021, researchers with grants have had the opportunity to enter into a part-time employment relationship (10%) with the university, improving their status and guaranteeing them access to the benefits normally covered by the employment relationship, as well as allowing them to become more closely involved in the university community.

### Developing a quality system

The university’s quality system has been streamlined by abandoning the separate, unit-specific quality manuals, which require a lot of maintenance work. They have been replaced with a university-wide quality management description, the university’s common process descriptions and operating guidelines. The description and documentation of quality management is gathered in one place on the Heimo quality management website.

The university has a functioning quality organisation, which has been updated to reflect organisational changes and at the same time cooperation between different levels of the organisation has been strengthened. The Quality Group, which is responsible for guiding and developing quality work, works well, as do the quality teams and the network of People in Charge of Quality in units. The network is well established and acts as a good relay of quality information from the quality bodies to the staff.

Internal audits and management reviews have been developed to support strategic management and performance management as part of knowledge management.

## Strategic Human Resources Plan

Human resources planning aims to implement the strategy and renew the operations through successful recruitments and employee selections. The plan includes mapping the competence available in international and national networks and through other cooperation scenes and identifying competence that provides the most added value to research and education (expanding the recruitment pool).

The aim of human resources planning is to create a three-year outlook of competence and recruitment needs and how to find the necessary resources to meet those needs. The plan is updated annually.

Human resources planning assesses the competence of current staff, the loss of competence through exiting employees, and the competence relevant to retaining and renewing functions. Human resources planning concerning external funding projects supports the implementation of the project and the related recruiting activities. It is also a part of the unit and its functions, contributing to supporting their renewal.

High-quality human resources planning is predictive, engaging and supports the equal and non-discriminating treatment of the people who participate in the recruitment process.
Human resources planning includes preparing a plan for the implementation of recruitment (proactive recruiting).

# 4 HEI as a learning organisation

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

*The evaluation area IV assesses an area selected by the HEI where it wishes to receive feedback for the enhancement of its activities.*

**The audit team identified the following key strengths and recommendations:**

**Strengths**

- Internationalization is a goal of UEF, and there was wide acknowledgement that great progress has been made on internationalization in the recent past.
- Evaluating the experiences of international staff and students in university surveys and other evaluations is a positive activity that should be continued, together with the copious next steps identified by the university.
- International students are generally satisfied with their programs, many caring faculty members and staff, and good overall experiences, including a quality welcoming program.

**Recommendations**

- UEF should explore avenues to enhance career progression opportunities and career security as well as enhancing Finnish language learning opportunities for international staff. The university should ensure that all community members, regardless of language skills, are able to participate in decision making and governance.
- UEF should ensure that Finnish staff obtain more international experience and intercultural competence through interaction with existing international staff and students who are present at the university.
- UEF should ensure that international students have support as they transition to learning in the Finnish style. The university should also evaluate the structure of courses and programs targeted to international students to determine whether the course structures are optimal for the intended audience.

# 4.1 An evaluation area selected by the HEI

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## University of Eastern Finland as a study and work environment for international students and employees

One of the key priorities of the University of Eastern Finland's strategy is internationalisation. The key to internationalisation is not only to recruit international staff and students successfully, but also to engage them in the university community. In order to achieve this, the university has chosen as its optional assessment topic *The University of Eastern Finland as a study and working environment/community for international students and employees*

## Orientation and integration of staff in the workplace community

At the university, the staff orientation model is the same for both Finnish and international staff. Although the process itself is similar, more in-depth orientation training is provided for international staff, both at the university level and in faculties, and content is tailored as needed.

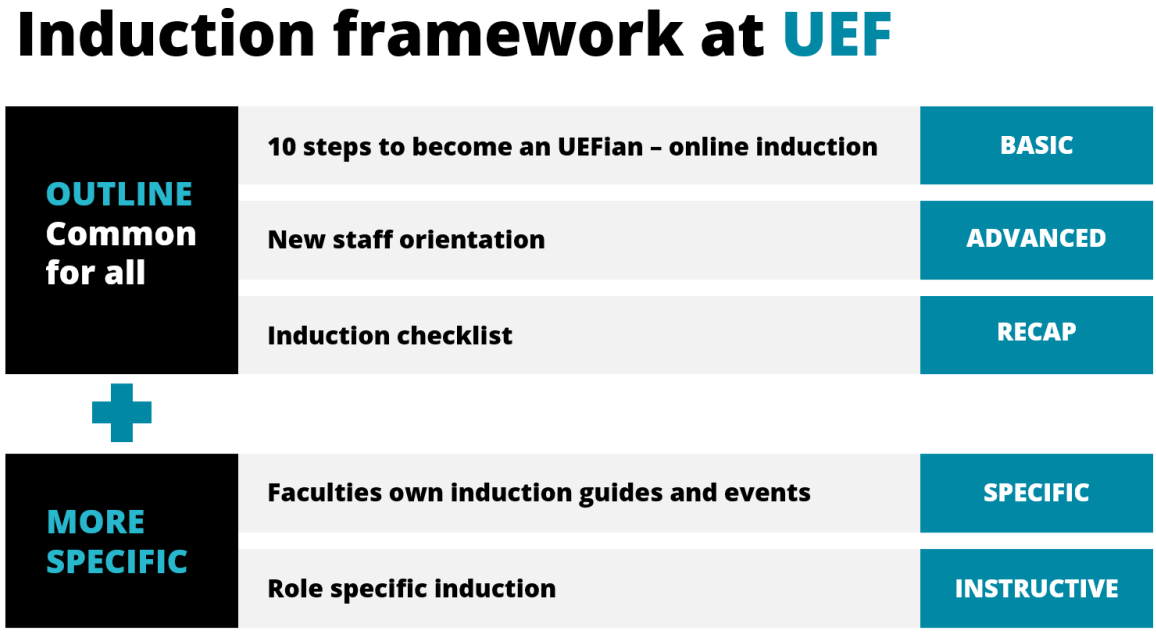



Figure 10 Induction framework at UEF

The university has piloted the 'Working in Finnish Universities' online orientation package. UEF has a 10-step orientation package (online), which sets out the key issues for each new employee.

Welcome to the Team events are held twice a year, in the autumn and spring semesters.

Orientation topics include: ‘Working at the UEF – employment relationship’ and ‘Living and working in Finland – essentials of Finnish social security, taxation and health care’.

In accordance with Section 35(2) of the Universities Act (558/2009), the administrative language of the University of Eastern Finland is Finnish. Bilingualism is consolidated in the official policies and institutions of the University. In accordance with the language guidelines of the university, the languages of the university’s meetings are Finnish or English, which can also be used in parallel to ensure everyone’s participation. The languages of the meetings should be chosen so that everyone can participate. Language choices are announced in advance, for example in the invitation to the meeting.

The coexistence of Finnish and English in the university’s functions (the UEF Board, University Collegiate Body, and the Faculty Councils) is made possible by the translation of agendas and minutes in cases in which the function includes non-Finnish speakers. In addition, it has been agreed that the meetings of the steering groups and faculty councils are to be announced in both Finnish and English in order to promote participation.

The university encourages its international staff to learn Finnish and has made Finnish language courses available. Diversity and cultural awareness training is provided for all staff. The goal is increasing the bilingual culture of dialogue at different levels.

The university’s Human Resources Services help faculties and units with the orientation of incoming international staff, whether in relation to the workplace community or the practicalities of living in Finland. For international people coming to work at the university, information is available on a public website. Further guidance for staff hosting international staff is available on the Heimo website.  The actual orientation and integration into the workplace community takes place at the unit/department level. In services with a high number of international staff, the picture is different from that of services with a low number of international staff. As a result, the need for support also varies from unit to unit.

The Faculty of Science and Forestry has the highest proportion of international staff among the university’s faculties. The faculty has invested in the orientation process and refined the general orientation guidelines with a faculty-level induction.  The A.I Virtanen Institute for Molecular Science has a particularly long history of working to integrate international staff into the workplace community. The NeuroInnovation doctoral programme has done an excellent job of prepping new recruits through virtual meetings even before they arrive in Finland.

There were no significant differences between the responses of international staff and Finnish staff in the University Services Service Survey. Only in terms of access to staff training did international staff perceive the situation to be worse than that of Finnish staff.

## Integrating international students into the university community

International students have access to the same study opportunities and learning environments, as well as accommodation in campus towns and cities as Finnish students. Students have been shown to generally group up within their own reference group. However, according to the surveys and questionnaires carried out, international students would like to be more integrated into the wider student community. In addition, employment in the region requires integration into Finnish life.

International students have access to international career services, which should be strengthened. While students see career guidance as important, both the university's and campus cities' (incl. Employment Offices) career guidance and integration services are poorly known. International students have their own tutoring, and in the future the intention is to combine both domestic and international tutoring. Weekly meetings of the network of coordinators of international master's programmes and international student services promote collaboration and the development of common operational model.

International students would like more information and support on issues such as:

- Finnish language and workplace culture, e.g., a FAQ page or Q&A questionnaire
- Employment-related administrative activities, such as residence permits
- Events where businesses and students meet and network
- Career stories of international students who have found employment
- Personalised career guidance at different stages of their studies

In addition to the services provided to international staff and students, the broad promotion of internationalisation also requires measures for the university community as a whole. The key is to make the identified development needs visible. The university's diversity work outlines measures to promote this objective.

Internationalisation and diversity have been a university-wide theme in the university level.

Internal audits between 2020 and 2022. In the faculties' and units' own internal audits, the following findings emerged from interviews with management, staff, and students. International staff were also interviewed.

| Diversity and internationalisation: General audit findings |
| --- |
| For the most part, the university's basic principle of equal treatment is implemented well |
| Bilingualism is common in meetings and English-language material is already relatively widely available. However, better opportunities for international staff to use and practise Finnish in discussions without changing the language of conversation to English were requested. |
| More informal guidance and administrative messages should also be in English. |
| People from different backgrounds are generally well integrated into the workplace. However, international staff felt somewhat left out of the activities of the units, as they are not always necessarily included in the discussion and daily activities. This leaves them out of social contact or feeling ignored. |
| There is a wide range of services and information available for both staff and students, but the biggest challenge is to find the right information and service among all the information. |
| The communication is bilingual across the different channels and the visual communications are also designed to reflect different nationalities and cultures. |
| From the perspective of those working with international staff, information about new employees is not passed on to HR in a timely manner and they do not reach all new employees in a timely manner. The quality of the orientation also varies greatly from one institution to another. Significantly more time would be needed for the individual orientation of international workers. |
| Career progression opportunities were seen as largely equal, and recruitment is very responsive to candidates from different backgrounds. Qualifications, expertise, and suitability for the job are the main factors influencing recruitment. More international staff are employed than before and in a range of positions, including management. |
| There is no difference in access to complementary research funding and salary levels between international and Finnish staff. |
| Finnish and international staff work in the same offices. This was seen as facilitating integration and developing language skills on both sides. |

Figure 11 Findings from internal audits

| **Strengths** | **Enhancement areas** |
| --- | --- |
| Services for international staff and students have been strengthened at different levels | Developing skills in workplace services for diversity mainstreaming |
| Informal meetings between management and international staff | Systematic use of feedback from international students and staff |
| Internationalisation and diversity as part of university management training provides approaches and tools for supervision. | Involving international staff and students in decision-making |
| In the recruitment process, materials and guidance are available in Finnish and English and the application process is transparent | Developing a comprehensive orientation for international staff |
| Leadership’s information sessions and other staff events are bilingual and material is available in two languages. | In cooperation with campus cities and authorities, working together to integrate staff and their families |
| The integration of international staff into the workplace community has been identified as a strong area for development | Strengthening career services for international students |
| The UEF trainee programme supports the employment of international students | |

# UEF as a study and work environment for international students and employees

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

## Suitable and timely choice of topic

The audit team commends UEF for its choice of “UEF as a study and work environment for international students and employees”. The audit team thinks that this was a timely, relevant choice of topic that resonated with many of the individuals the audit team interviewed.

The SAR shows a high level of ambition in this area and that many steps have been taken in recent years to improve internationalization. Evaluating the experiences of international staff and students in university surveys and other evaluations is a positive activity that should be continued. The copious next steps identified by the university is a clear strength.

It was clear from interviews that is widely known across the university that internationalization is a goal at UEF. There was wide acknowledgement in the interviews that great progress has been made on internationalization in the recent past. Areas like the new language use policy and updated welcoming processes were highlighted as places where meaningful changes have been implemented. However, it was also clear that there are still many challenges facing international individuals studying and working at UEF. The process to internationalize the university, to make it an excellent place to work and study for all people, has begun well but is still in progress and some steps are still needed.

## International staff see progress, but needs further support

The interviewed international staff valued their working relationship with the university. They recognized the work the university has done to become more international staff friendly in recent years. However, international staff still face many hurdles in their employment experiences. The audit team recommends that resources are allocated to improving the international staff experience, including continual monitoring, and improving of the international staff experience by leadership.

The first two years of Finnish language courses for staff were generally praised. However, language is still a barrier to participation in many areas of university governance. In interviews, international staff reported that the university-offered staff language courses were insufficient to bring language learners to a level of Finnish advanced enough to participate in governance and other activities at the university. This restricts their ability to engage and advance as employees

at the university and hinders their integration into the community. Continuing advanced language trainings would not necessarily have to be expensive or complicated: mentoring arrangements, regular casual learn-professional-Finnish meetups, informal or formal tutoring, mutually beneficial paired language learning, and other mechanisms could allow the goals to be achieved efficiently and at relatively low cost. The audit team recommends UEF to enhance Finnish language learning opportunities for international staff.

The implementation of the new language policy was cited as encouraging internationalization. It allows everyone to participate in meetings and decision making regardless of language abilities. Some units, especially the student union, are doing excellent work: they provide interpreters for non-Finnish speakers or pro-actively decide the language of the meeting at the start of the meeting based on the abilities of the speakers present. The presence of multilingual materials was common, but continual improvement on this axis is important. Some unit members reported being essentially unable to participate in governance or other group work tasks due to language challenges. The audit team recommends UEF to ensure that all community members, regardless of language skills, can participate in decision making and governance. Sharing the best practices of the units already successfully implementing multilingual practices would be a good way to move forward.

The audit team considers it a strength that internationalization and diversity training is a component of management training. From the interviews the audit team learned that the workplace experiences of international staff were highly variable based on unit. Some units were exceptionally well integrated, developed to a point where internationalization was the norm and managers understood the challenges faced by international staff. However, in some units it was reported that this was not the case. Supervisors should know the importance of their role for international staff and understand the challenges international staff face. International staff friendly procedures should be integrating throughout the university. While all managers cannot be responsible for all components of an international staff member's experience (housing, visa, health care, etc.), supervisors should know who to turn to for assistance in these matters.

Professional development opportunities for international staff are growing at UEF. However, some international staff reported a lack of ability to progress career-wise or seeing no career potential at the university due to their international status, despite reporting working hard to try to succeed. Some of the lack of ability to progress career-wise was due to language challenges, but other challenges were also cited. Some of the professional development opportunities are still in Finnish only. It was also reported that non-Finnish-speaking staff had reduced capabilities to participate in CV-building events. The audit team recommends UEF to enhance the professional developments to non-Finnish-speaking staff.

Attracting new international talent is vogue and attracts a lot of attention. Multiple international staff pointed out that retaining and supporting the international staff who are currently present does not receive a similar focus as new international staff. Staff felt that enhancing support for existing international staff would likely reap long-term rewards. Support both in the short term,

like finding housing, helping with health insurance, visas, and language, and long term, like helping identify career paths and facilitating progression along them, were viewed as important.

While career security seems similar for international and Finnish individuals on the surface, the two groups do not experience career security in a similar manner. International staff often lack local support networks and may face serious ramifications if they lose employment contracts, such as expulsion from the country. The lack of employment security will lead, and reportedly has already led, to international staff leaving the university.

Employment security support is critical for the well-being of international staff, and this support needs to be maintained throughout employment relationships. Employment security challenges were reported in the audit visit even after multiple years of continuous employment and extremely hard work at integration. The audit team thus recommends the university explore avenues to enhance career progression opportunities and the career security of existing international staff.

## International students have good experiences, but progress is still possible

Students reported general satisfaction with their programs, many caring faculty members and staff, and good overall experiences. International students praised the educational language skills of the faculty members and reported that excellent English language instruction and educational materials were provided. Teaching and learning methods were generally praised, with faculty described as approachable and characterized by a lack of hierarchy. The flexibility of the system, including of deadlines and program contents, was highly praised.

The educational model used in Finnish higher education institutions frequently requires independent planning and execution. However, some international students may not be used to this. They reported suffering from a lack of guidance in their studies and a difficulty adjusting to the Finnish system. Students requested more guidance when creating personal study plans and a reduction in the number of self-study courses, especially in core- and early-in-the-program courses. The audit team recommends that international students should have support as they transition to learning in the Finnish style. The structure of courses and programs targeted to international students should be evaluated to determine whether the course structures are optimal for them.

International students reported that individual meetings with their program coordinators were often extremely useful. However, at the same time, several students reported in the interviews that it was difficult to figure out who to approach with problems and that some pinballing of problems – being sent from person to person with no resolution – occurred. As identified in the university's internal audits, there is a wide range of services and information available, but the challenge is to help students and staff find the right service or information. The audit team

recommends that the university pursue techniques to facilitate international students and staff to find the services and information that they need. UEF should develop a system to regularly obtain feedback from international staff and students on this topic.

In the audit visit, students generally praised hybrid course offerings. Online, or at least hybrid, courses can provide flexibility for international students who may need, for example, to travel to other countries on short notice. In the interviews, some international students reported not wanting to take solely online courses. Thus, the audit team recommends continual evaluation of course modality in international programs. Modality is important to ensuring the success and well-being of students.

International students report that the welcome works well. The services for international students have been strengthened at the university. They still miss comprehensive career planning. Students reported a lack of support in finding jobs or internships. Others spoke of differences between opportunities at different campuses: international students at the Joensuu campus reported that there were fewer career-related events, as career fairs were mainly held in Kuopio. International students reported in interviews and the workshops that it was challenging to interact and form a community with native Finnish students despite a strong desire to do so. Some of them pointed out that the activities and social media accounts of the student groups are in Finnish. Therefore, they do not include international students who have limited Finnish skills. The audit team recommends better support and mentoring for international students, and more opportunities for them to meet Finnish students.

## More international experience and intercultural competence for all students and staff needed

The audit team considers the university is ready to take the next step in internationalization: to regard international students and staff as integrated into the university community. To do this is to embrace international staff and students who are coming to the university as individuals who have an impact on the university, who will change and transform the university through their presence and experiences. Yet the audit team observed in interviews and workshops that the focus of the university was on how to integrate international staff and students into the existing university community, viewing them as an "other" coming in who should be integrated into the existing culture. A more productive view could be that those in the university community gain and learn from the international staff and students and build a joint, hybrid culture that is neither wholly Finnish nor wholly international.

The audit team recommends that the university have a stronger focus on Finnish staff obtaining more international experience and intercultural competence. It could happen in interaction with existing international students and staff who are present at the university. It can also potentially happen through other mechanisms like staff mobility and student exchange.

# 5 Benchlearning

## - Högskolans självvärdering

## Benchlearning objectives and process

The University of Eastern Finland (UEF) and the University of Jyväskylä (JYU) benchlearning project related to Assessment Area I was launched following a discussion in the UEF Leadership Group. The discussion identified the theme of continuous learning as important for the university. JYU was seen as an interesting benchmark and an advanced player in the field of continuous learning. JYU agreed to partner and learning themes were identified for the respective benchlearning partners under the theme of continuous learning. The process is described in more detail in in Figure 12.

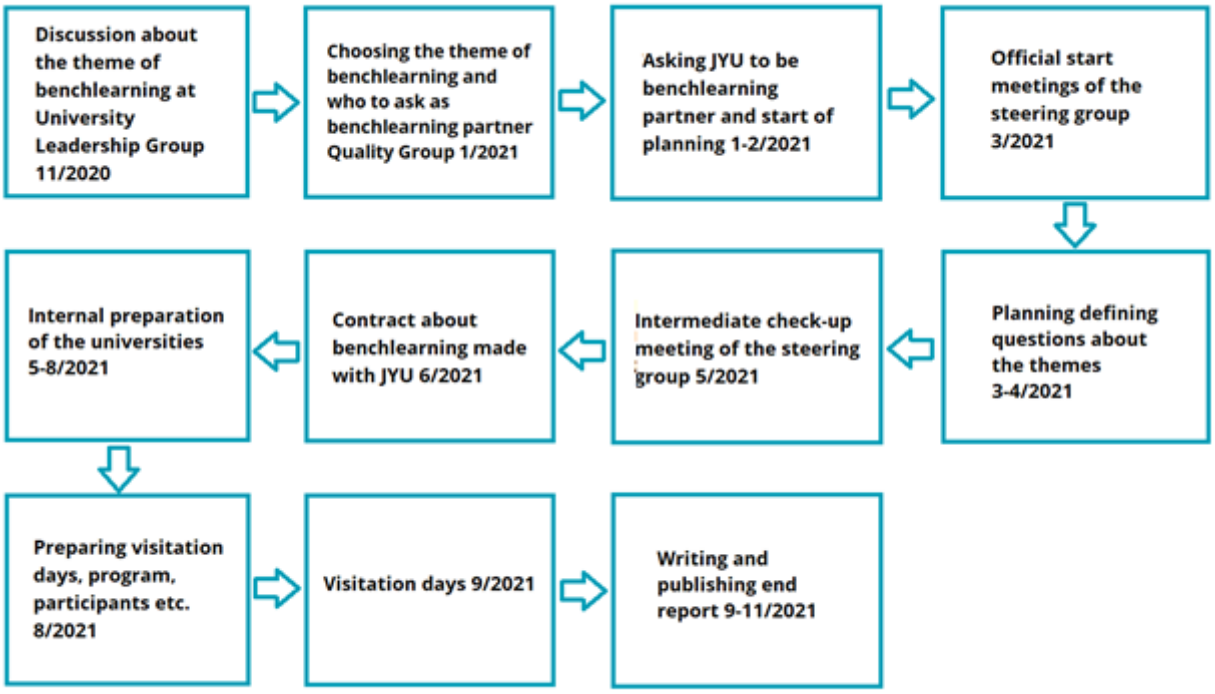



Figure 12 Benchlearning process with University of Jyväskylä

The chosen theme was continuous learning, which was divided into two areas: open university teaching (UEF's learning area) and continuing education (JYU's learning area), and stakeholder collaboration in both areas.  The specific sub-themes are described in Figure 13.

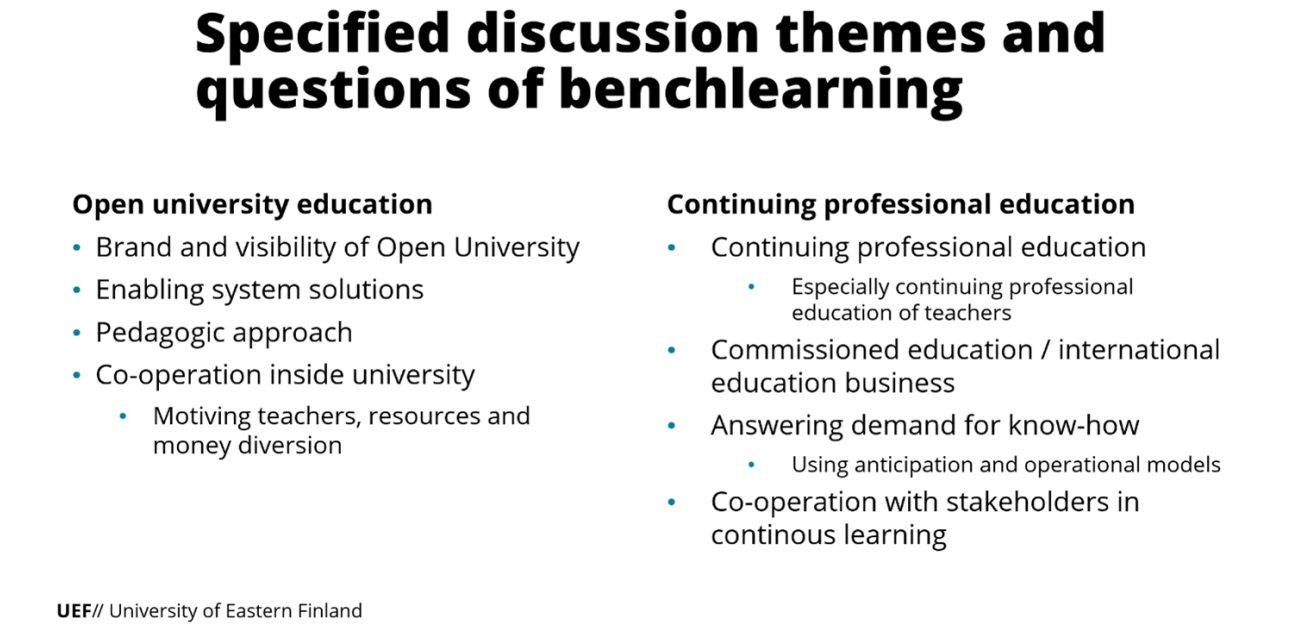



Figure 13 Themes and questions of benchlearning

Benchlearning visit days were organised on 3 September 2021 in Jyväskylä and 7 September 2021 in Kuopio. The programmes for the visits is attached. The visits were carried out as a hybrid event, with some participants meeting on-site and other participants participating via Teams. The day in Jyväskylä covered topics related to open university education and the day in Kuopio covered issues related to continuing education. After the visits, each organisation reflected in its own way on what the benchlearning visits had provided and compiled a summary of the findings. Based on the findings, a joint report was compiled.

The whole benchlearning process was perceived as excellent. The joint preparation was smooth. The chosen topic was important to both organisations and, through it, the learning topics that were important to both were identified. During the process, several good practices and areas for improvement were identified in relation to the theme of continuous learning. The discussions were open and reflective in a good spirit. The joint benchlearning discussion highlighted that, although organised in different ways, both universities are also grappling with very similar issues and challenges. Overall, the process has been very educational.

## Benchlearning outcomes

UEF's strength was the efficient use of resources, as teaching is integrated and teachers teach both open university students and degree students at the same time. The funding model supports integrated open university teaching by the units. Processes have been streamlined and, for example, certificates have been harmonised between institutions and the Centre for Continuous Learning. Continuous learning is strongly reflected in the university's strategy. Continuous learning was seen as a well-produced entity and a logical description of the service

delivery process for continuous learning has been made. A people-driven approach to relationship building has been adopted, with activities opening up through designated account and relationship managers.

Development needs that have emerged during the process include making the pathway for open university students starting their studies more student-centred. Involving different actors in branding and blogging is something that can be learned from a benchlearning partner.

JYU's strengths were the student-centred nature of its open university activities and the international perspective, which was well taken into account in its development. In marketing, branding work is focused on key target groups and products, but smaller target groups and products are also highlighted where appropriate. Branding is part of what everyone does at every stage of the marketing process. The mapping of customer needs is systematic.

The benchlearning partner saw the improvement of access to the CRM-9 system in their own operations as a development target, and, through it, the possibilities of using after-sales marketing. It was also felt that deepening the customership thinking and combining B2B marketing with RDI activities could bring a new perspective to stakeholder cooperation. UEF's pilot experiences with hybrid open university and continuing education products were good learning points.

## Evaluation of benchlearning

Both universities considered the benchlearning process to be successful and useful. As a process, benchlearning has been very interactive. It has opened up new channels of discussion and helped to find new contacts for cooperation.

The advantages of using benchlearning were seen in the exchange of ideas, easy comparison of approaches, and learning together from each other. For example, during the process it became clear that there is no one right way to do things; instead, there are many different ways to do the same thing.

| Good practices of your organisation | Good practices of the partner organisation |
| --- | --- |

Efficient use of resources when teaching is integrated and teachers are the same

Certificates are harmonised between institutions and the Centre for Continuous Learning

Learning management and learning services for lifelong learning are centralised in the Centre for Continuous Learning, but subject-related expertise is still provided by faculties and departments

Continuous learning is an integral part of the activity and strategically part of the teaching process, and institutions agree on who is responsible for what

Continuing learner's permit for alumni two years after graduation

Digital services have a dedicated person responsible for the Open University

Course templates in Moodle

Developing management information systems for continuous learning and open university teaching, e.g., showing real-time credit accumulation in the system

Digital Guides to support the use of digital tools

The career path to teaching for younger researchers could be developed through continuous learning

**Concrete actions to be applied on the basis of the benchlearning process**

Centre for Continuous Learning has named contact person for communications in Communications and Media Relations.

Teachers from departments have been included in marketing and they have been encouraged to write and produce blogs etc. to promote opportunities of the open university. Budget of Centre for Continuous Learning includes resources to do paid advertisement with that content.

## Audit team's feedback

UEF selected the theme of continuous learning including stakeholder cooperation after a discussion at the University leadership group in November 2020. The quality group choose the theme and the partner to invite in early 2021. The audit team considers the theme to be well aligned with the mission and profile of the university since UEF is one of the largest providers of open university education in Finland. In the UEF Strategy 2030 continuous learning is highlighted with education that anticipates societal needs. The benchlearning partner, the University of Jyväskylä (JYU), has as a strategic goal in their educational development program: "The operating model for continuous learning renews the world of work and the competence of those who operate". The audit team agrees that JYU was a good choice as partner in the benchlearning project with the theme continuous learning. During the audit visit, it became clear that continuous learning is an area of great importance to the university.

The process for the project is displayed in the SAR and shows an integrated process with both

partners involved in planning and performing the exercises together and ending up with a published report. Several good practices at both universities were identified and concrete actions have already been taken. The process was excellent and the joint preparation smooth according to the SAR, with the overall judgement being “very educational”. The value of a benchlearning exercise with exchange of ideas and learning together is praised. The project has been successfully carried out despite the pandemic. This is a good example of mutual learning and great collaborative work.

# Appendix 1. Evaluation criteria for the level good

## 1 Evaluation area I: HEI creates competence

### 1.1 The planning of education

The degree programmes and other provision are planned with clearly defined learning outcomes. The planning process ensures that the educational provision is in line with the HEI's strategy and relevant for working life. Aspects concerning internationalisation and continuous learning needs are ensured in the planning process. In terms of degrees, it is ensured that they correspond with the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules. The education is planned so that the teaching methods, assessment of learning, and learning environments support the achievement of the learning outcomes. Students and external stakeholders participate in the planning of education in a purposeful manner. Research, development, innovation and artistic activities are integrated in the education in a way that links research-based information to the education in a relevant way. The students' workload is defined according to the principles of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). The HEI has systematic procedures for approving the plans for degree programmes or other study entities.

### 1.2 The implementation of education

The HEI applies the provisions and regulations concerning student admission, the recognition of prior learning, progress of studies and completion of degrees consistently and transparently. The education is implemented in a manner that supports target-oriented learning and the active role of students in their own learning process. Students receive feedback on their learning which helps them achieve the learning outcomes. The procedures connected with the implementation of education support the efficient progress and completion of studies as well as the integration of students with professional life. The well-being and equality of students are promoted throughout the student's study path. The HEI provides adequate resources, counselling and other services to support the progress of studies and learning.

### 1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

The HEI systematically collects and uses feedback data on the needs of students, the implementation of the education and the progress of studies in order to enhance the education. Feedback-on-feedback, i.e., information on changes introduced based on student feedback is provided to students in an appropriate manner. The HEI monitors and evaluates the degree programmes and other provision to ensure that they are up to date with regard to the latest research findings as well as the changing needs of the society and working life. Opportunities for continuous learning are ensured in the educational provision. In the degree programmes and

other provision, how well the intended learning outcomes are achieved is analysed. Feedback and evaluation data is used systematically in the enhancement of education. The needs of staff and students are considered in the development of support services.

### 1.4 The HEI's examples of successful enhancement activities

The HEI is able to present examples of successful enhancement activities.

## 2 Evaluation area II: HEI promotes impact and renewal

### 2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

The HEI enhances its societal engagement and impact, and this is also supported by its management system. The HEI has defined goals for its societal engagement and ways in which it attempts to reach those goals. Information produced by the HEI's analysis of its operational environment is used to set the direction for its activities. Appropriate procedures help to ensure that societal engagement supports the implementation of the HEI's overall strategy.

### 2.2 Research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities with impact

The HEI's research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities contribute to reforming society. Targets have been set for the impact of the HEI's research, development, innovation and artistic activities. The HEI collects relevant information regarding the societal impact of research, development, innovation and artistic activities, and the information is used in the enhancement of these activities. The HEI has systematic procedures for ensuring the responsible conduct of research. The HEI enhances open science.

### 2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

The organisational culture of the HEI encourages experimental activities with partners and strengthens the conditions for a creative atmosphere. The HEI seeks opportunities to engage with stakeholders in activities which enable renewal and enhancement. The HEI has functioning procedures that support the use of the competences possessed by its staff and students. The HEI has target-oriented cooperation with its alumni and it utilises the alumni in enhancement activities. Collaboration with both national and international networks supports the enhancement of the HEI's activities. The HEI has well-functioning procedures for managing and updating its stakeholder relations and collaboration networks.

### 2.4 The HEI's examples of successful enhancement activities

The HEI is able to present examples of successful enhancement activities.

# 3 Evaluation area III: HEI enhances quality and well-being

### 3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

The principles, objectives and responsibilities of the quality system constitute the HEI's quality policy, which is public. The quality policy forms a common basis for the quality work. The information generated by the quality system is used in the management of the HEI. The system supports the profile of the HEI, the achievement of its objectives related to the core duties and the implementation of its strategy. The HEI ensures that the staff recognise the connection between their own work and the goals of the HEI.

### 3.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff

The HEI has functioning procedures to identify development needs concerning staff competence and to support the development of staff competence. The HEI has transparent procedures for staff recruitment. The HEI has systematic procedures to support the well-being, equality and non-discrimination of staff.

### 3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

The HEI has a functioning quality system which covers its core duties. The quality system helps the HEI to recognise development needs and to enhance its activities in a goal-oriented manner. There is evidence of the functionality and impact of the quality system on the enhancement of the core duties. The system is developed in a systematic manner.

The quality culture of the HEI is participatory and open. Staff, students and external stakeholders participate in the enhancement of the HEI's activities in a purposeful manner.

### 3.4 The HEI's examples of successful enhancement activities

The HEI is able to present examples of successful enhancement activities.