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FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

# AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

Författare **Marja Sutela, Lena Gumaelius, Damon Mohebbi, Attila Pausits, Marja-Leena Rinkineva, Mirella Nordblad & Mira Huusko. University of Ljubljana self-assessment (eds.) Marina Šučur, Vanja Perovšek & Maja Hosta**

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## Audit of the University of Ljubljana

# Abstract

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

### Title of publication

Audit of the University of Ljubljana

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University of Ljubljana self-assessment Marina Šučur, Vanja Perovšek, Maja Hosta (eds.)

### The Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision

The University of Ljubljana passed the audit on 26 January 2024

The Quality Label is valid until 26 January 2030.

### The audit team's evaluation of 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

Quality assurance of the joint educational offer

### Theme and partner for benchlearning

Theme: Quality assurance and joint programmes

Partner: EUTOPIA network

### Key strengths and recommendations

#### Strengths

- The University of Ljubljana (UL) has good initiatives to enhance education, including

institutional-, faculty- and academy-level projects.

- The UL is tightly connected with its surrounding society through various activities. Alumni and stakeholder engagement is strong.
- The quality system is linked to the implementation of the strategy at the levels of the university, faculties, academies, and services. Dedicated instruments, such as the institutional strategic plan and action plans, annual reporting, and self-assessments, ensure a systematic institutional approach to quality assurance and enhancement.
- The university has a clear strategic goal to increase internationalisation in educational provision, which is a prerequisite for developing joint educational offerings.

## **Recommendations**

- Parallel structures at faculty and university levels for the enhancement of education cause unnecessary complexity. The university should ensure that actions are taken, and the quality loop is closed on institution-wide quality challenges, such as drop-outs.
- The UL should specify university-wide objectives for societal engagement and impact. These objectives should be linked to activities, monitoring, and the measurement of activities. Societal engagement should be more strongly linked to the university's management system.
- The university's fragmented structure challenges the effectiveness of the common quality system. The university should look for synergies in its existing structures, processes and responsibilities related to quality assurance and enhancement to overcome overlaps and to some extent inefficiency in its use of resources.
- The university should move from an individual approach to an institutionalised approach in joint study programmes. This would guarantee a solid common knowledge base, a platform for sharing experiences and good practices as well as common guidelines.

# Premise and implementation of the audit

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) has conducted the audit of the University of Ljubljana. The work of FINEEC is based on the principle of enhancement-led evaluation and producing impactful information that contributes to the enhancement of education.

The purpose of the FINEEC audit framework is:

- to evaluate whether the quality work in the HEI meets 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 framework are described in [the audit manual](#).

## Implementation of the audit

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

- Vice President **Marja Sutela**, University of Tampere, Finland (chair)
- Associate Professor **Lena Gumaelius**, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden
- Student **Damon Mohebbi**, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Germany
- Head of the department, Professor **Attila Pausits**, Danube University Krems, Austria
- Director of Economic Development **Marja-Leena Rinkineva**, City of Helsinki, Finland

**Mirella Nordblad** was the FINEEC project manager of the audit and **Mira Huusko** was the backup project manager. **Kati Isoaho** was the FINEEC project manager until 27 September 2023. The audit is based on the material submitted by the higher education institution, a self-assessment report, additional material requested by the audit team, and the audit team's visit to the institution 10 to 12 October 2023. The audit team also had access to essential digital materials and systems. The main phases and timetable of the audit were:

Agreement negotiation	16.12.2019
Appointment of the audit team	3.3.2023
Submission of the audit material and self-assessment report	12.7.2023
Information and discussion event	28.9.2023
Audit visit	10-12.10.2023

Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision on the result	26.1.2024
Publication of the report	29.1.2024
Concluding seminar	15.2.2024
Follow-up on the enhancement work	2027

## Evaluation criteria

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, its stakeholders, or both. The HEI presents compelling examples of successful enhancement activities.

The level *good* for 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, evaluation areas I–III should reach at least the level *good*.

# The organisation and strategy of the HEI

## - Högskolans självvärdering

The University of Ljubljana (UL) is the oldest and largest higher education and scientific research institution in Slovenia. It is the only Slovenian university ranked among the 500 best universities according to the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU/Shanghai Ranking).

UL comprises [23 faculties, three arts academies](#) (UL Members) and [four associate member institutions](#). UL thus creates competence in all main academic disciplines, including the arts. It employs more than 6,500 people: two thirds are higher education teachers, associates and researchers and one third are professional staff. Teachers and associates are, for the most part, registered as researchers at the [Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency](#) (ARIS).

Almost 40,000 students are enrolled across all three cycles in a total of 339 study programmes in 2022/23. More than half of all Slovenian students study in the bachelor, single-cycle master, master and doctoral study programmes.

UL importantly contributes to sustainable development, innovation and promotes creativity. UL is the central and largest research institution in Slovenia with 30 percent of all registered researchers (according to the data from the SICRIS database). UL fosters basic, applied and developmental research, and strives to achieve excellence and the highest quality, and to meet the highest ethical standards in all areas of the arts and sciences. In 2022 the UL had 3,383 articles published on Web of Science (WoS). It is engaged in 331 projects and 186 programmes financed by ARIS, along with 639 EU and other European programme projects.

UL's commitment to notions of social responsibility can be seen in its cooperation with knowledge users in cultural, economic and social fields. As it is keen to maintain and strengthen this role in the future, and to maintain and increase its standing in the international arena, the UL is involved in international associations and partnerships.

UL is committed to attainment of the highest quality and well-being.

## Organisation

UL is organised in a decentralised way.

The bodies of the UL are the Rector, the UL Senate, the UL Governing Board and the Student Council. The Rector heads and represents the university. His advisory bodies are the College of the Rector and College of Deans. The College of the Rector consists of the Rector, the Vice Rectors, the President of the UL Governing Board, the UL Secretary General and the Rector's assistants and advisors. The College of Deans consists of the Rector, the Vice Rectors, the Deans of the UL Members, and the President of the Student Council. The UL Senate is the university's

highest professional body. Senate members (senators) may be elected from among the teachers who are full-time employees of university members, and the students. The UL Governing Board (UO UL) primarily decides on economic matters and ensures the smooth material operation of the university. The Student Council of the University of Ljubljana (ŠS UL) is the body of university students. It consists of the president and vice-presidents of UL Members Student Councils.

The bodies of the UL Members are the Dean, the Senate, the Academic Assembly, the Governing Board and the Student Council. The Dean heads and represents the member faculty and is, at the same time, the faculty's management authority when it operates on the market (Annex to Article 26 of the UL Statutes). UL Members have one or more vice-deans. In addition to the bodies referred to above, UL Members may create other bodies whose composition and powers are defined by the rules.

In the implementation of the National Higher Education Programme, whose funding is provided by central government, UL Members enter into legal transactions with the authorisations granted by the university's instrument of constitution and statutes, on behalf and for the account of the university. In other cases, UL Members enter into legal transactions on their own behalf and for their own account in accordance with the university's instrument of constitution and statutes (ZVIS, article 10).

In accordance with the law governing the operation of the university and the [Decree on the transformation of the UL](#), UL Member may also carry out other educational, research, artistic, developmental, professional and consulting activities or other related activities, which are defined in the annex to the statute (market activity). The conditions and elements of determining the value of services and the use of funds (e.g. tuition fees, the value of consulting services) are regulated by regulations. UL Member has its own account, to which it receives funds directly (Statutes of the UL, article 26).

This distribution of power has historical roots. A faster and more integrated response to today's challenges is hampered by considerable bureaucracy outside and within UL, and by a management system based on terms of office. This legal arrangement provides UL Members in practice with considerable autonomy in relation to the university leadership.

Students are involved in formulating and adopting strategic and operational decisions at UL. They are actively and formally involved at UL Member and UL level. They are members of senates and senate committees, members of the Governing Boards and student councils. In addition to involvement in UL bodies and their working bodies (committees), which is guaranteed by law and implementing regulations (ZVIS, UL Statutes), they also take part in other working bodies (e.g. working groups). They are invited to advisory meetings/events (meetings of vice-deans, College of the Rector, consultations, conferences, quality coordinators' meetings, working and focus groups). Student activities therefore go beyond formal inclusion in university bodies and reflect the importance of cooperation, equality of position and respect. Student initiatives are evident from the decisions of these bodies (e.g. the initiatives for discussions between UL Members heads

and teachers with poor student survey results and for better support for students' practical training). In addition to activities in UL bodies, students are also active in the university's key development activities. Students took part in the preparation of the UL Strategy 2022–2027 at specially planned meetings, in the preparation of the UL Strategy 2012–2020 and the preparation of the Internationalisation Strategy 2014–2017 at committee level and UL Senate level.

The UL professional services perform developmental, expert, technical and administrative tasks via the Rectorate and UL Members' secretaries' offices (UL Administration). UL Administration is headed by a UL Secretary General, while the UL Members' secretarial offices are headed by UL Member Secretary General. The UL Governing Board lays down rules defining the organisation of services at UL, and the structure of jobs is defined by the Rector, at the recommendation of the UL Secretary General or Dean of the UL Member.

The university, via the Rectorate, carries out common tasks for all UL Members, in particular:

- establishes and maintains a unified information system,
- establishes and maintains a career centre,
- establishes and maintains a unified library system, university archive and digital repository,
- organizes and implements joint programs of extracurricular activities at the UL,
- organizes interdisciplinary studies,
- monitors and ensures the quality of educational, scientific research and artistic work,
- coordinates and records participation in international projects in the field of educational, scientific research and artistic work,
- manages the intellectual property of the UL,
- establishes and takes care of a uniform protocol at the university,
- establishes and maintains records (personnel, financial, student and study, etc.),
- supervises business and financial flows within the university and prepares a consolidated balance sheet,
- plans and manages investments,
- establishes and maintains central records of the property of the university and its members,
- coordinates and supervises the efficient use and maintenance of premises and equipment of the university and its members.

## The most important strategic objectives

The ultimate strategic objective of UL is to become 'A recognised and established academic institution in Europe', which includes placement among the top 400 universities in the ARWU and QS rankings, and among the top 20 universities in the QS Emerging Europe and Central Asia rankings, along with international accreditation for UL and all its member faculties.

Five specific strategic objectives are as follows:

Strategic objective 1: first-rate learning experience and high employability of graduates→



strategic activities planned: developing and updating study programmes, intensifying the internationalisation of education, developing a comprehensive lifelong learning programme, promoting teaching excellence, offering financial support for the renewal of educational activities;

Strategic objective 2: top achievements in science and the arts→

strategic activities planned: upgrading the support environment for scientific and artistic work, increasing financing for scientific and artistic endeavours, changing the way achievements in science and the arts are evaluated, enhancing internationalisation in science and the arts;

Strategic objective 3: a prestigious partner institution for the transfer of knowledge, innovations and creativity→

strategic activities planned: upgrading support processes in the shared services at the UL, proactively seeking strategic partnerships for the transfer of knowledge and the arts, communicating achievements in science and the arts to the target audiences;

Strategic objective 4: an academic institution that serves as a role model in respecting diversity→

strategic activities planned: ensuring and developing an inclusive and equal environment, providing information, awareness-raising, education and training to assert the principles of equality, systemically supporting accessibility of study to special-status individuals, ensuring ethical conduct by all;

Strategic objective 5: social effects – social prosperity and progress→

strategic activities planned: strengthening the role of expert and scientific argument in society, leading efforts for the sustainable development of society and intergenerational dialogue.

For all strategic objectives indicators were determined for controls using target values.

To achieve the vision of the UL 2027 the [University of Ljubljana Strategy 2022–2027](#) comprises five development areas and three support areas.

The development areas of the strategy are as follows:

1. develop education, integrated in the home and international environments, to promote creativity, innovation, critical thinking and social responsibility,
2. promote excellence in science and the arts, integration in the international environment, an interdisciplinary approach, openness and social relevance,
3. enhance support for the transfer of knowledge and the arts in all spheres of social life,
4. promote an accessible, inclusive and equal academic environment, and
5. strengthen the UL's social role and position in the national and global social dialogue.

The support areas of the strategy are as follows:

- strengthen autonomy and finances,
- upgrade processes and infrastructure,
- support staff development.

# 1 HEI creates competence

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

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

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

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

### **Strengths**

- The University of Ljubljana (UL) has good initiatives to enhance education, including institutional-, faculty- and academy-level projects.
- The collection of student feedback is rigorous. Students have many ways to give feedback and feedback is used to improve activities. The student voice is well heard at the university.
- The tutoring system is widely appreciated by the students.

### **Recommendations**

- The university should streamline its structures for the enhancement of education. Parallel structures at the faculty, academy and university levels cause unnecessary complexity and ineffectiveness in the system.
- The university should ensure that actions are taken, and the quality loop is closed on institution-wide quality challenges, such as drop-outs.
- The university needs to adopt a strategic and systematic approach to the pedagogical development of its academic staff, providing competence development opportunities for teachers across all academic levels. To remain at the forefront, criteria should be established for the monitoring of teachers' professional development.

# 1.1 The planning of education

## - Högskolans självvärdering

### Accreditation of new study programmes

UL's strategic goals in the educational field are the provision of a broad and diverse range of study programmes based on the development of disciplines and the modernisation of key competences, knowledge and skills in accordance with the requirements of a sustainable future and Society 5.0. The fundamental principles of education are based on the values of social responsibility, ethics, cooperation and the strengthening of critical thinking. UL is autonomous in its decisions on proposed new study programmes, for which [SQAA](#) awards accreditation for an indefinite period and carries out sample and extraordinary evaluations. Students participate in the competent bodies at UL Members and the UL. External experts act as peer-reviewers in the process of accreditation of new study programmes at the UL and at [SQAA](#).

### Development and modification of study programmes

Under existing legislation, the university is responsible for developing and modifying accredited study programmes so as to take into account the suggestions and needs of providers, students or external stakeholders. Students and external stakeholders are included in regular self-evaluations of study programmes. They can also communicate suggestions via student surveys and other formal and informal meetings and conversations with supervisors, study programme directors or vice-deans.

Procedures for the accreditation and modification of study programmes (Ba-Ma, and PhD) are set out in the Instructions for the management of degree study programmes of the UL (available in the intranet).

For the purpose of managing data on study programmes as laid down by the [Higher Education Act \(ZViS\)](#) and in order to support the process of their modification, UL has developed the Electronic Register of Study Programmes – EŠP (for more, see 1.4).

As required by the [ZViS](#) envisaged learning outcomes are a compulsory component of a study programme. They are divided into general competences and subject-specific competences. In terms of levels, they follow the level descriptors contained in the [ZViS](#) and the [Slovenian Qualifications Framework](#), while in terms of recommendations they follow Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives.

Learning methods, testing methods and the learning environment support the achievement of learning objectives, which is verified in two cycles:

- in the process of accreditation via peer-reviewers (external experts) – peer learning activity,
- in the process of maintaining and improving quality via student surveys and self-evaluations of study programmes.

Course providers are encouraged to evaluate course syllabuses every year and verify the connection of methods of work with learning objectives. UL Members are responsible for approving syllabus contents.

Pilot projects as part of ULTRA (a project from the Recovery and Resilience Plan 2022–2025) are focused on renewal of the curricula of all 29 professional higher education study programmes at UL. These projects are inter- and multidisciplinary. The key objectives of curriculum renewal are the introduction of twin (green and digital) competences and the development of a system of micro-credentials. The renewal is being tested in two evaluation cycles; the final report will contain guidelines from the competent ministry for the development of a national strategy for LLL and education with micro-credentials.

## Connections of study programmes with the working environment

Professional bachelor study programmes are legally required to include work experience (placements, internships). The same applies to academic bachelor study programmes in the fields of education, healthcare, medicine and the arts and those leading to qualifications for occupations that are regulated at the European level. An increasing amount of practical training or practical course elements are also being incorporated into study programmes via projects, in order to introduce problem-based learning and student-focused learning. Study programmes for the most part include compulsory or elective practical experience in the working environment, along with applied assignments/seminars and tutorials, while doctoral programmes also include research in the context of research projects connected to real challenges of the environment/society.

External experts as mentors participate in the provision of individual course contents.

Study programmes for continuing education are additionally connected to the working environment and needs for specialised knowledge. In the context of LLL, a prototype of cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce is being prepared, which will serve as a basis for designing an educational offer involving micro-credentials. Other forms of LLL in the form of summer schools, courses, seminars, training sessions or conferences are offered to various interest groups (for more, see 2.).

## Internationalisation in education

Internationalisation is available to students (exchanges) and graduates (practical training abroad). UL also takes part in bilateral cooperation for double degree programmes and accredits

[joint study programmes](#) in which student mobility is compulsory. Agreements on joint implementation of research and co-supervision of UL students' doctoral theses in cooperation with a foreign university or research institution (co-tutelle) represent a special form of cooperation (for more, see 4).

All UL Members offer groups of courses in English for the needs of international students participating in mobility programmes. UL Members provide some study programmes in English because many foreign students enrol in them. Foreign students are offered the opportunity to learn Slovene in the one-year [Year Plus](#) programme (for more, see 1.4).

## Incorporation of research and innovation/artistic activities into learning and teaching

Responsibility for education is held by higher education teachers with habilitation and references in the fields they teach. In order to obtain and maintain or be appointed to a more senior rank, they must demonstrate research or artistic achievements in this field. They regularly transfer their research activities into the study programme as part of the teaching process or supervision. UL encourages international teacher exchanges since these lead to new cooperation or enhance existing cooperation both in research and in educational activities, in this way making an important contribution to the pedagogical and professional development of teachers and to their development as researchers. A large number of domestic, international and EU projects contribute to competences of graduates, the international mobility of students and teachers and visiting lectureships by foreign lecturers. Diversified and in-depth research cooperation with a range of prestigious universities and institutes in other countries creates a favourable environment for students and their subsequent integration in academic and economic spheres.

Student workload is measured via student surveys, individual interviews with students and conversations of students and coordinators of individual academic fields, supervisors/co-supervisors, lecturers and course providers, and student representatives on bodies of UL Members and the university.

Student surveys allow us to assess the actual workload estimates, expressed in ECTS credit points and actual student workload and differences between the individual course units making up a study programme. Reports are prepared at the UL Members and programmes level and at the UL level. Five-year trends are monitored at all levels (for more, see 1.3).

### Strengths

Transparency of procedures for the planning and development of study programmes.

### Enhancement areas

Introduce new methods for quality assurance of new content, especially for micro-credits.

The Electronic Study Programmes Register (EŠP) ensures the transparency of procedures, data and development of study programmes.

The long and high-quality tradition of Life Long Learning (LLL).

Well-developed alumni relations and a high-quality career counselling system.

Good cooperation with foreign universities and institutions, resulting in internationally comparable and competitive UL study programmes.

Clear communication of new content development and public visibility of the UL's commitment to the goals of a sustainable society.

Conversion of old LLL models to new environments by issuing e-certificates, tokens, etc.

Develop tools for communicating with society to identify any needs for new knowledge.

Develop interdisciplinary study programmes and coordinate the development of interdisciplinary courses by multiple UL Members to achieve greater integration, considering a bottom-up approach.

## 1.1 The planning of education

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### Rigorous processes for the planning of education

The University of Ljubljana (UL) employs a robust process of curriculum development and periodic reviews to ensure that the educational provision aligns with the university's strategy and national frameworks. The academic planning is guided by national and international quality assurance standards to guarantee that the UL's programmes meet standards at different qualification levels. There are multiple levels of involvement in the process, and various groups such as students, administrative and teaching staff as well as external stakeholders are engaged. For example, there are monthly meetings between the vice rector for study and student affairs and vice deans of education. According to the audit visit, 20% of the members of the University Senate are students. The student council is regularly invited to discuss matters with the rectorate.

Each new programme undergoes internal scrutiny and must receive approval from the university's senate. Furthermore, study programmes are accredited by the national quality assurance agency. These processes offer ample opportunities to ensure that suitable teaching methods and assessment techniques are used in courses, enhancing the students' ability to achieve their learning objectives.

All programmes follow the Slovenian qualifications framework. According to the self-assessment report, intended learning outcomes are identified in a participatory approach and they follow Bloom's taxonomy. The constructive alignment of studies is ensured through accreditation processes, student feedback and self-assessments. Intended learning outcomes are mainly derived from strategic objectives on the faculty level but would benefit from further integration with the broader institutional strategy on a university level.

According to the self-assessment, the student workload is assessed through student feedback, student interviews and discussions. The staff also assess the workload of students. The actual workload is assessed through student surveys and expressed in ECTS credits. Although the university has a credit transfer system (ECTS), which allows students to transfer credits from one institution to another, the recognition of studies undertaken in other faculties or universities depends on the faculty.

#### The University of Ljubljana is internationally oriented

The university wants to establish itself as an institution with extensive international cooperation. Students have excellent opportunities to pursue parts of their studies abroad through partnerships with other universities. The internationalisation abroad is at a good level and many



academic staff and students mentioned the encouragement and good opportunities in place for international mobility and cooperation. The key challenge recognised by management, academic staff, students, and external stakeholders was the internationalisation of the university at home. This relates both to the educational provision in English and attracting international degree students and staff.

The university has challenges attracting international degree students and teachers, although in some faculties around 20% of doctoral students are from outside Slovenia. The instruction at the UL is primarily conducted in Slovene, even at advanced levels, such as master's and PhD programmes. Knowledge of Slovenian is required to actively participate in the university. During the audit visit students mentioned that international students tend to avoid lectures and other instructor-led sessions, opting to tackle courses independently. Several interviewees recognised that more programmes in English are needed to attract international students. Currently, national laws require that the university curriculum in English is also provided in Slovene, requiring additional resources. According to the audit visit, the law is motivated by the need to protect the Slovenian language and the need to keep academics in Slovenia. Several interviewees considered that the current legal framework does not support internationalisation. Based on the visit, there is also reason to review the information provided to incoming international students and staff. Incoming international students and staff require assistance navigating administrative issues.

## Education is research based

The UL has introduced measures to encourage academic staff to strengthen the linkage between education and research or artistic pursuits. According to the audit visit, teachers engage students in their own research, but there is variation between the faculties. During the audit visit, teachers were concerned about how to get more students to be involved in research. The students also wished that they could be more involved in research projects.

Research-integrated teaching is a fundamental component of the University of Ljubljana's educational provision, particularly at master's and PhD levels. However, it may be worth considering how research integration can be further strengthened, even at the bachelor's level. Such integration could hold the potential to mitigate dropout rates, as the students would be likely to feel a stronger connection to their educational and research context.

## The university fosters new initiatives and a commitment to being at the forefront

The UL has a strong tradition of collaboration with the surrounding community and labour market in terms of shaping the educational provision and ensuring that the UL maintains a relevant and up-to-date curriculum. Partners are included in the planning of education. According to the audit visit, the study programmes are not only geared towards today's labour market, but also towards the jobs of the future and what the world may be like in 20 to 30 years' time. Some teaching staff stressed that it is also important to teach students generic skills such as critical thinking, problem

solving and good research skills.

An example of this are micro-credentials, which are educational modules developed in partnership with other societal actors and intended to be implemented at the UL as soon as possible. Initially, these modules will be offered to those already in the labour market seeking to enhance their professional skills. A successful pilot programme will potentially lead to the next step, where micro-credentials become a part of the regular educational provision. The micro-credentials represent a promising agile new form of education which can swiftly answer to the needs of external stakeholders. The university's focus on societal engagement is also evident through the numerous student placements it offers. According to the audit visit, many study programmes include practical training or seminars.

Discussions are currently underway on how the UL can progress to provide a greater number of transdisciplinary courses and study programmes with sustainability and social impact serving as guiding principles. Based on the audit visit, it is evident that trans- and interdisciplinary approaches are already integrated into doctoral studies. Sustainable development is an area that could receive more emphasis in the university's developmental efforts to signal a stronger commitment to climate change and equality, diversity and inclusion issues.

## 1.2 The implementation of education

### - Högskolans självvärdering

#### Procedures to ensure transparency in student selection

Admission and entry requirements and selection criteria for candidates in the case of limited enrolment are a compulsory component of every study programme. Enrolment conditions and selection criteria are defined by the [ZViS](#), so universities have relatively little autonomy. Conditions and criteria are published in study programme information brochures and annual calls for enrolment, while information is also provided on various other occasions (open days, information days, individual consultations for candidates, etc.).

Secondary school students have access to an analysis of enrolment from previous academic years, where they can check which programmes had limited places in previous years and how many points successful candidates had. The points system is made public, and candidates can make their own calculations based on grades obtained and the possibility of enrolment in programmes with limited places.

#### Recognition of prior learning

Candidates' prior learning is recognised in the context of the application and admission process. Recognition of prior learning abroad is carried out pursuant to [The Act on Evaluation and Recognition of Education](#).

Following enrolment in a programme, prior learning is evaluated on the basis of a request from the student and recognised on the basis of proof of the type and scope of knowledge obtained. In some cases, prior learning can be recognised as an already completed unit of the study programme in which the student is enrolled.

#### Teaching methods that support target-oriented learning, encourage students to take an active role in the learning process and give feedback on their learning

Learning methods and assessment are defined by each course syllabus and adapted to the expected general and subject-specific competences. As well as lectures, teachers use guided discussions and encourage independent work by students, group work, practical work and the inclusion of students' experiences in the study process. Other methods of work include laboratory experiments, learning through research, problem-based learning and project work. To a lesser extent, some teachers also use flipped learning.

In recent years teachers have been rapidly introducing new learning methods and digital technologies to their teaching, in part as a reflection of intensive training in the use of modern methods and approaches to teaching ([INOVUP project](#), e.g. Encouraging active and self-regulated learning – more in 3.2; [Digital UL Centre](#), e.g. The use of ICT in the learning and teaching process). Numerous examples of UL Members encouraging the active involvement of students and use of ICT are given on the [website](#). Through projects under the umbrella of [the EUTOPIA Alliance](#), we play a part in creating learning communities that offer a wide range of forms of learning (e.g. negotiation simulations, student-led research projects) (for more, see Chapter 5).

Knowledge is assessed on an ongoing basis or at the end, with the help of written or oral examinations, individual assignments, and complemented by feedback on knowledge with the help of various forms of student participation (e.g. discussions, tutorials, teamwork, presentations of products, individual consultations, peer learning activities).

## Connection to working life in the implementation of education

The integration of theory and practice is facilitated by:

- various forms of learning and teaching (e.g. problem-based learning, project assignments);
- practical training integrated into courses or in the form of individual courses (for more, see 1.1);
- participation in research projects, artistic projects and professional projects and extracurricular studies (e.g. student innovation projects for social benefit – for more, see 2.1, promotion of international individual research projects and other examples such as moot courts with simulations of trials (Faculty of Law), idea accelerators (Garaža at the Faculty of Computer and Information Science), concerts (Academy of Music) and many more);
- visits to employers, presentations of employers and alumni career paths (for more, see Chapter 2.3);
- doctoral students carry out research at UL Members and participating research institutes and clinics. The majority are involved in programmes and projects of the [Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency](#) (ARIS), EU research projects and research projects taking place in conjunction with industry.

## Flexible study paths and mobility

The flexibility of study paths is made possible in the following ways:

- At least 10% elective courses within a study programme, of which at least 5% are from outside the study programme (in bachelor's and master's programmes), which can also include an extracurricular studies (for more, see 1.4).
- Mobility.
- Recognition of knowledge obtained in other environments and other forms. Extension of

student status for justifiable reasons in special cases.

- Adaptations for students with special needs and statuses (with regard to their learning disabilities; special exam sessions for athletes; adaptations for students with mobility impairments; extra time for examinations; etc.).

Student exchanges between universities in Slovenia are regulated by two documents: the [agreement](#) and the [procedure](#) (in Slovene). Information days and other activities are organised at UL Members in order to promote international mobility. Recognition of courses completed abroad takes place on the basis of submitted proofs and a previously signed study agreement.

## Student support at different stages of their studies, promotion of the well-being of students and equal treatment

All UL Members offer a wide range of assistance and advisory services. Student affairs offices at UL Members provide general assistance and advice to students. Other free services provided include:

- [Student Ombudsman's Office and custodianship over the rights of students](#) (promotion of principles of equality and inclusion, protection of dignity, respect for and tutelage of students' rights).
- Contact persons at all UL Members [for students with special needs and special statuses](#) offer useful information and support (funds to co-finance the purchase of equipment and devices; assistance with participation in international exchanges).
- [Srčna UL](#) campaign (financial support for students experiencing financial hardship).
- [Tutelage](#) (support with integration into studying and student life).
- [UL Careers Centres](#) and [extracurricular studies](#) (activities to develop competences not directly included in the study process).
- Careers advice for students.
- [Psychosocial Counselling Service](#) for students and staff.
- Study corners and introduction of learning ergonomics to the study process via development measures.

## Completing study programmes

Conditions for the completion of studies are a mandatory component of a study programme required by the [ZViS](#), which also sets out the manner of completion of studies for each individual cycle, where a final written thesis is envisaged for master and doctoral programmes but is not compulsory for bachelor programmes. The method of completion is evaluated with ECTS credits. In programmes where a final thesis is envisaged as the completion of studies, this is regulated at UL Members by rules defining the format and length of the work, while its content is linked to advertised topics or topics selected by the student.

## **Strengths**

Various forms and opportunities for student and staff mobility, especially at the international level.

Transparency in the student selection and the completing study programmes.

Establishment of a student ombudsman office; adoption of the Gender Equality Plan (NES) to ensure the implementation of equal opportunity and inclusion principles.

A well-organised tutelage system. The Psychosocial Counselling Service for students and staff provides mental health support, which proved particularly necessary during the COVID pandemic.

Successful integration of various different areas of activity and dissemination of results in the educational process.

## **Enhancement areas**

Improve procedures for recognition of prior learning, especially informal and non-formal learning. The issue here is mainly related to certificates, which are not always adequate.

Ensure flexible admission requirements in legislation or authorisation to higher education institutions to decide on admission requirements and the selection of candidates, regardless of the number of available places.

Develop procedures to promote flexible study paths at the national and international levels, and an information system to facilitate the choice of electives and greater interdisciplinarity.

Raise awareness of equality and inclusion among UL Members; encourage female students' participation in STEAM.

Introduce new didactic approaches and knowledge facilitators. Strive for pedagogical excellence; develop new teaching and learning methods; promote student-centred learning and teaching.

## 1.2 The implementation of education

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### Transparent but inflexible admission system

The University of Ljubljana (UL) does not hold much influence over the admission of students to its various programmes on the undergraduate level. The process is transparent, based on the grades of prospective students with regulations set by the government. In its self-assessment, the UL indicated, the desire to work towards greater autonomy in student admissions. Enhanced autonomy in admissions and the right to decide on the selection process would enhance several other study-related processes at the university. In the long run, this could result in improved outcomes in terms of dropout rates and intended study durations (see discussion below).

There are university level procedure and criteria on the recognition of the knowledge and skills obtained through informal learning. According to the self-assessment, previously acquired competences are recognised in the context of the application and admission process and can be validated at the respective faculty. Recognition of studies abroad is granted in accordance with legislation. Based on the audit visit, there is room to improve procedures for the recognition of prior learning at the university.

#### Student-centred learning is promoted

The UL promotes active student engagement within the learning process. This approach advocates for active learning methods, such as group discussions, problem-based learning, flipped learning, and hands-on projects. Additionally, the UL encourages students to set their intended learning outcomes and develop individual study plans that encompass extra-curricular activities. Students can request exam reviews during teachers' open hours to receive feedback on their learning progress. The audit team recommends that students would also get feedback on assignments and exams digitally, allowing students to track their progress and make necessary improvements. Learning analytics could also be used more.

Teaching staff participating in the workshop talked about challenges with the new generation of students, the need to use various techniques to keep them motivated and to activate them. Students' great expectations for the teaching are not always coupled with the students' own input, stressing the need for student-centred approaches and emphasising also the students' own responsibility for their learning. In terms of teaching and learning, students participating in the audit workshop described only a few methods such as lectures, practical training, and group work. This could imply that either the teaching and learning methods are limited, or the students' awareness of the methods and their impact on their own learning could be improved. The audit team recommends that teachers enhance the students' awareness of teaching and learning

methods, explain why they have chosen particular methods, and how they are supposed to facilitate student learning.

The connection to the labour market is a core element of the UL's educational approach. This is realised through internships with industry partners, guest lectures, and industry experts. Flexible study paths and mobility are actively promoted through international networks and activities such as the EUTOPIA network.

## Procedures need to be improved for study completion

In several study programmes, the drop-out rate is over 50%. In some programmes, there are no graduates within the expected timeframe. The Slovenian student population is varied with a large proportion of the age group going to university. Based on the audit interviews, there are financial advantages for young people to have a university student status. It was mentioned that many young people seek the status without having the motivation to complete their studies, or that they do not want to graduate because they would need to give up the benefits. Some students take all the exams and courses for a degree, but then do not complete their master's thesis. Many students are already working at the end of their studies. The covid-19 period and mental health issues further lengthened the graduation times.

It was mentioned during the audit visit that teachers talked with students to get them to understand why completing their studies was important but considered that they did not have the means to make them graduate. Scheduling and requiring a certain level of attendance for passing a course were described in workshops as some efforts made to improve student attendance. There are still numerous internal improvements that could be made at the university. The audit team recommends that university-wide actions are taken to tackle dropouts and study times and ineffectiveness in the system.

## Student wellbeing is supported through the tutoring system

The UL has an efficient system for supporting students' wellbeing, with each student having access to a tutor. Tutors are either advanced students or teachers who can provide academic guidance on matters related to courses and programmes. The tutoring system also serves international students and students with special needs. During the audit visit, the system was praised as highly valuable by students and academic staff members. Tutors report to the faculties' administration.

Student wellbeing is also considered by other actors. There are a student council and several different student organisations at the university, which receive funding directly from the state. According to the audit visit and self-assessment report, there are lots of programmes for student wellbeing at the university level, such as Tutelage support, the Srčna UL campaign, psychological counselling services, and "How are you feeling?" meetings. Students also have a mentor whose task is to encourage them to graduate. In doctoral studies, supervisors are mainly responsible for



the welfare of doctoral students.

The equal treatment of students is a principle at the UL. There are regulations in place against non-discriminatory actions and these allow accommodations on diverse needs. Student ombudsmen are available to address any study-related issues, rights of students and equality, inclusion, and dignity. They also give counselling to students and publish booklets for students. There is a gender equality plan to ensure the implementation of equal opportunities and inclusion principles. A special rector's fund for extracurricular activities, student conferences and sports are also offered. The UL has also declared itself to be a LGBTQ+ friendly university.

## The university could further develop teachers' pedagogical training

Teaching methods and approaches are annually reviewed as part of the university's quality management procedures. Based on the audit visit, the university is committed to staying at the forefront of new pedagogical approaches. Several projects such as the INOVUP project have enabled interested academic staff to enhance the teachers' pedagogical skills, such as student-centred teaching and learning methods. The Centre for Pedagogical Training and the Digital UL Centre have been established to assist educators with digital techniques in teaching (see also Chapter 2.3).

According to the audit visit, a lot of pedagogical courses have been offered at the university level. An overarching programme for academic staff pedagogical training is still missing and there is no established model for the development of teachers' pedagogical competence. The university could benefit from creating a basic curriculum of pedagogical courses for all teachers and encouraging teachers to participate in pedagogical training in different ways. Several faculties appear to have incentive structures where promotions may depend on completing a set of courses. It is vital to include full professors in such initiatives to prevent older academic staff from being left out of these novel endeavours. Another area where a centralised approach to pedagogical training could be beneficial is in the context of supervising doctoral students. A university-wide review and provision of additional training would enhance supervisors' skills in effectively guiding and mentoring their students.

According to the audit visit, some of the course materials are outdated and no longer meet current requirements. It was mentioned that some lecturers do not update their knowledge enough. Each faculty also has a Moodle platform, but not all teachers are willing or able to use it. In the scenario where the intention is to become one of Europe's leading universities, the university should reinforce the teachers' incentive structure. This would help teachers to understand the importance of participating in continuing training and staying up to date with the newest global developments but also the university's own ambitions. Academic staff wished for more support and instructions and help from the UL to meet challenges concerning AI.

## 1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

### - Högskolans självvärdering

#### Student surveys

The assessment of knowledge is covered by student surveys, where this aspect of the study process is monitored via a General Student Satisfaction Survey and a more specific Course Content and Provider Survey. In these two surveys, assessment is one of the fundamental dimensions of individual course provider quality verification, while these surveys also serve as the basis for the preparation of aggregate results by study programmes, UL Members and the UL as a whole. The results are considered each year by student affairs committees and quality committees at UL Members and at the UL level. To date, we have not detected systemic shortcomings regarding the correlation between assessment and the effort invested by students in the course. Individual discrepancies (non-systemic) are dealt with in the context of self-evaluation of study programmes, where the UL Rules on Student Surveys provide that the responsible person (study programme director, head of department/chair or dean) is required to take action, which is also what happens in practice (for [more, see Student surveys](#), in Slovene).

During a review of reports on the use of student surveys at the Quality committee, specific areas of student surveys which will require more attention in renewal process were presented. These include the scope of the survey, the inclusion of competences and learning outcomes, the transparency and usefulness of extracts, publishing the surveys, scales, adaptations for doctoral programmes and adaptations for programmes with smaller numbers of students enrolled, the speed with which the results of the surveys are obtained (i.e. how up to date they are) and the inclusion of exchange students in the completion of surveys. On the basis of this review and our findings, we have prepared a proposal for a renewal of student surveys with an emphasis on student-centred learning and teaching.

#### Self-evaluation of study programmes

Regular self-evaluation is carried out for each active study programme with the aim of monitoring and improving quality. Self-evaluation of study programmes thus serves to ensure the quality of programme provision, to monitor the current relevance and sustainability of each individual study programme, and as a process intended to promote successful and effective studying.

Self-evaluation of study programmes is the basis for overhauling and modifying programmes and represents a crucial mechanism for improving both the quality of programmes and the process of studying. Self-evaluation of study programmes is performed annually or every two years, and the conclusions of this process are incorporated into the Business and Quality Assurance Report of the UL Members and UL. In this way, as a central quality mechanism the process considers the

results of all other mechanisms (planning study activities, student surveys, monitoring the employability of graduates, employee satisfaction, enhancement-led visits), analyses and recommendations, which together facilitate in-depth reflection and the more comprehensive formulation of improvement measures. In this way the self-assessment of study programmes is also integrated into the management of UL Members, which ensures a systemic consideration and response to the findings (for more, see 3.1 and [Self-evaluation of study programmes](#)).

The process of self-evaluation of a study programme also means involving other important stakeholders (staff, students, other stakeholders) in its preparation alongside the programme director. Employers, commissioners of services and graduates also contribute valuable feedback through which study programmes can monitor the needs of society and professional life and take them into account in programme provision. All participating stakeholders are likewise regularly informed about the key points of the self-evaluation report.

## Enhancing the activities of support services

With the purpose of enhancing the activities of support services in UL Members and the UL, regular meetings of the college of deans, colleges of vice-deans, study programme directors and sectoral support services are held. The aim of these meetings is to improve coordination, the exchange of information and good practices, and the coordinated activity of UL Members and the UL in our areas of activity. Sectoral services are likewise involved in the functioning of UL bodies and their working bodies, such regular meetings can lead to common guidelines in solving common issues on different areas.

UL encourages support service staff to participate in training and mobility abroad (administrative staff mobility via Erasmus+, project work, job shadowing, etc.) in order to exchange good practices and identify improvements in their field of work (for more, see 3.2).

### Strengths

The process of self-evaluation is practised at all levels and ensures quality throughout the whole university. Self-evaluation is carried out at a micro level through the self-evaluation of the study programme, which is an integral part of each UL member's annual self-evaluation. These reports are then included at the macro level in UL's annual self-evaluation report.

Regular meetings of the deans' collegium, vice-deans, meetings of study programme directors and UL Members support services.

### Enhancement areas

Increase participation of external stakeholders (businesses, strategic councils, employers, etc.) in self-evaluation processes. Enhance informal cooperation with a view to formalising the collection of proposals and opinions from external stakeholders.

Better integration of the self-evaluation of study programmes into the functioning of the quality system in UL Members, so that those who conduct self-evaluations find it a useful and relevant tool.

Student survey reports for courses, teachers, study programmes, UL Members and at the UL level.

Mid-term student survey reports for teachers to address any ongoing challenges in the provision of the teaching process during the year.

Development of new learning methods, also fostered by the [ICT](#), [INOVUP project](#) and ULTRA project.

Review UL student surveys. Increase student motivation to complete such surveys so they understand that their feedback is important, useful, and will be considered, and provide appropriate “feedback on feedback”.

Greater integration between areas of activity, especially between research and education.

## 1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### The student feedback system and self-assessments are key to ensuring the quality of education

The UL has systematic procedures in place for the collection, analysis, and use of both feedback and evaluation data for the enhancement of its educational provision. Both students and teachers are required to complete evaluation surveys at the UL. Students complete surveys after each course. All students get an invitation to complete the survey when enrolling for the exam. Although completing the survey is optional for the students, they provide the university with rich data for enhancement activities and for monitoring trends and serve as a fundamental tool for enhancing individual courses and overall programme quality. The teaching staff must also report received feedback to the dean of faculty or academy. The UL used to conduct graduate surveys, but since 2020 the graduate surveys are conducted by the Ministry of higher education, science and innovation. HEIs can access overview data at programme and institutional levels. The use of the graduate tracking data was little discussed during the audit visit, suggesting that national survey data could perhaps be better utilised. There are many external stakeholders in the UL's quality loop to evaluate and to improve study programmes and other educational activities.

According to the self-assessment report, providing appropriate feedback on student feedback is an area for enhancement at the UL. Changes introduced based on student feedback are discussed at different bodies, such as faculty and academy senates, in which students are also members. Based on the audit visit, some students also receive feedback-on-feedback from their teachers, but there was variation in this. All faculties would benefit from such an approach. It motivates students to give feedback to see the effects of their feedback. Such an approach would also enhance the overall feedback culture at the university.

According to the audit visit, the student voice is recognised effectively in habilitation processes. Students (student councils) write summaries of feedback and the summaries are considered in the habilitation processes. Collaboration between the University Student Council, faculty councils, and individual faculties is constructive. Faculty student councils play a crucial role but could benefit from improved infrastructure support, such as dedicated rooms with necessary technology. Acknowledging the efforts of council members could enhance motivation and overall effectiveness.

Based on the audit visit, the university encourages evaluation and self-reflection among teachers. Study programmes compile self-assessments each year or every two years. In the self-assessments, programme administrators, students and external stakeholders describe the programme and highlight its strengths and weaknesses. A plan for improvements is included and

is followed up in the subsequent evaluation cycle. The faculty-level self-assessments and improvements are communicated to the highest level at the university. The implementation of changes is discussed by various bodies and senates where students also participate as members.

According to the audit visit, the quality assessment processes are functional, but the effectiveness of the processes could be further enhanced. In addition to surveys, a deeper understanding could be gained by also collecting more in-depth data. For instance, conducting in-depth interviews or focus group discussions with students and teachers could provide a deeper insight into the challenges related to the quality of the educational provision. The periodical monitoring measures to assess the educational provision at the UL and at faculties allows for reactive actions. This could be improved by employing predictive analyses and learning analytics for a more proactive approach. The audit team recommends that the UL reviews its procedures for the evaluation of study programmes to ensure that important university-wide quality issues, such as dropouts, are discussed and improvement measures are taken and followed up (see also Chapter 3.3.). It would also be pivotal for the university to increasingly facilitate the sharing of its best practices in relation to the quality assurance and enhancement of educational provision across its faculties and academies.

## The university is working proactively to meet the evolving competence needs

The UL proactively considers the evolving needs of society and the demands of working life when enhancing its study programmes. This is achieved through regular curriculum reviews, industry partnerships, research, and innovation centres. The UL's intention is to provide more interdisciplinary courses related to societal challenges is highly recommended. It would also be important to actively encourage students to participate in interdisciplinary courses and that credits are aligned. Increasing the number of interdisciplinary courses to address the evolving needs of society would be advantageous (see also discussion in Chapter 2.3). This step would prepare students to navigate complex, multifaceted challenges and contribute more effectively to their fields.

The UL also ensures that the teaching is based on the latest research findings. The UL encourages its academic staff to keep up to date on the newest research in their domains by providing opportunities for continuing professional development. This will help guarantee that teaching is in line with the results of the current research.

Support services at the UL integrate staff needs through collaborative efforts, involving feedback mechanisms, surveys, and open communication channels. According to the audit visit, the UL seeks to foster a positive work environment. Regular assessments and adjustments based on student and staff feedback contribute to the continuous improvement of support services. The support services enhance their activities through a student-centred approach, counselling, and career services as well as orientation programmes.

Opportunities for continuous learning are on the university's strategic agenda. Such opportunities will be introduced through the micro-credentials system shortly as discussed above. These will be a valuable addition to the existing provision which will presumably also benefit the university's degree students.

Through the use of assessments, evaluations, and feedback systems, the UL evaluates how well programmes achieve the specified learning goals. This analysis provides important insights into areas of success and areas for development, which supports continuous progress in programme delivery. Through consistent evaluation of the fit between goals and achievements, the UL maintains a high bar for educational excellence and works to provide high-level education.

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

### - Högskolans självvärdering

#### Electronic Study Programmes Register

All information on study programmes that we are required to keep by the [ZViS](#) is registered in an application called the Electronic Record of Study Programmes (EŠP). This offers a complete overview of study programmes and their compulsory components and the development or modification data or components of study programmes for an individual academic year. It also serves as support for the process of modification of compulsory components and a tool for communication between responsible services at UL Members and the Rectorate for the implementation of procedures. Data export options make it possible to compare data by individual academic years and carry out analyses at the study programme, component of the programme or academic year level, which means that the application also allows an overview of development for each programme separately. It is regularly updated and improved on the basis of consultations with users and is connected to other applications at the UL and national levels.

#### UL Reporting application

In order to improve the quality loop and awareness of the quality system, we have developed a reporting application "Poročanje UL". With a series of upgrades and updates based on pilot testing and proposals from UL Members, we have additionally provided a closed quality loop in such a way that measures from annual self-evaluations of study programmes, the Work Programme and the Business and Quality Assurance Report are shared and applied in documents designed to improve integration and transparency and ensure more effective monitoring of their realisation. By integrating these processes within the application, we have reinforced the analytical field of self-evaluations, increasing their impact and reducing their administrative burden.

#### UL Centre for Extracurricular Studies

The UL Centre for Extracurricular Studies is responsible for ensuring the availability of a varied and diverse range of extracurricular studies that contribute to the holistic development of UL students and staff. By taking part in a wide range of extracurricular studies, individuals develop their interests, bolster their mental and physical fitness, build their network of contacts and play an active part in the UL community and the community at large. These extracurricular studies carry 3 or 4 ECTS credits. Since 2008, the UL Senate has approved 41 extracurricular studies. Students of bachelor or master study programmes at UL can sign up for activities as part of general external electives.



## Year Plus module for foreign students

UL offers international students the opportunity to learn Slovene through a one-year model called [Year Plus](#). International students enrolling for the first time in bachelor or master study programmes at UL for which knowledge of Slovene is not an enrolment requirement can learn Slovene free of charge. The purpose of the module is to enable easier integration and participation in the study process, which for the most part takes place in Slovene and, at the same time, to enable easier participation in life in a Slovene-speaking environment. Learning Slovene via the language course in this module is supported and complemented by numerous activities and workshops (literary workshop, workshop on the use of various language resources and tools for the Slovene language, lectures on Slovene music, architecture and cuisine, visits to various events, galleries, museums and the EU House, day trips to towns around Slovenia). In annual evaluations, students highlight the following as the biggest advantages of the Year Plus module: high-quality and free Slovene language learning, which helps them both in their studies and in everyday life and in obtaining work experience; establishing contacts and socialising with other international students, which is important above all in the initial period of getting used to and adapting to life in a new environment; getting to know Slovene culture and life in Slovenia; the possibility of earning credits; and the possibility of extending student status.

## EUTOPIA Alliance

One of the purposes of the EUTOPIA Alliance is to encourage the mobility of students, academic staff and other university staff via new forms of cross-border cooperation, research, teaching and learning. Over the last three years [30 connected learning communities](#), which are still operational, have been developed. We aim to establish and participate further such communities in the coming years (for more, see 5).

Participation in a connected learning community improves:

- international exposure for learning and research,
- insight into development in the higher education and research field,
- the possibility of (trans)national tenders and funding,
- recognition of international endeavours for staff and students.

Conditions and principles of connected learning communities:

- Principle of openness as the main principle of the EUTOPIA Alliance.
- Interdisciplinary approach, where learning and research units cover interdisciplinary topics or analytical tools that are necessary for understanding the global challenges facing our society.
- Active, student-centred learning, where students are not merely passive listeners but are involved as participants in the process of research, teaching and learning.
- Inclusion of non-academic spaces and actors: representatives of the business world,

cultural sector and public organisations participate in the learning process and (co-)create learning material with issues from real life. They are included in active teaching and address the challenges faced by European societies.

- Diversity of students: achieving a broad range of students who are motivated by innovative and flexible approaches.

## 2 HEI promotes impact and renewal

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

*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, the evaluation area II is at the level *good*.

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

#### **Strengths**

- The University of Ljubljana (UL) is tightly connected with its surrounding society through various activities. Alumni and stakeholder engagement is strong.
- The institutional research programme framework is a good way to enhance cooperation between faculties and foster interdisciplinarity.
- The UL is committed to cultivating an innovative organisational culture by encouraging experimental activities within the university and with partners both nationally and internationally.

#### **Recommendations**

- The UL should specify university-wide objectives for societal engagement and impact. These objectives should be linked to activities, monitoring, and the measurement of activities. Societal engagement should be more strongly linked to the university's management system.
- Societal engagement should be better connected with career progression, for instance, habilitation and annual appraisal.
- Staff engagement in open science could be improved through better participation in training activities of the senior scientific staff.

## 2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

### - Högskolans självvärdering

UL devotes particular attention to keeping the general public informed about its activities and is developing innovative approaches to communicate the mission of a public university. It seeks synergies among the various offices of the Rectorate (responsible for knowledge transfer, students and alumni, research) and addresses various target groups in conjunction with UL Members:

- the domestic and international academic public and professional public (e.g. presentation of achievements, successful projects (ERC) and breakthrough innovations);
- industry (via the alumni network, the Chamber of Commerce, the Knowledge Transfer Office, etc.) (e.g. presentation of results, knowledge transfer etc.) and the local environment;
- politicians, the government, ministries, the national research agency, other decision-makers (e.g. in the form of public events, provision of information and participation in various working bodies of ministries) (purpose: understanding of and support for research, support for expert decision-making);
- young people (e.g. via departments at secondary schools and career guidance) (purpose: stimulating interest in science and art as well as vocational guidance);
- the general public (e.g. via public events, round-table discussions, publications in the daily press and electronic media) (purpose: understanding of and support for science and art, prevention of non-scientific concepts).

Information is also provided daily via the [website](#) and social networks ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#)), while online events are posted on [YouTube](#).

### Repository of the University of Ljubljana

UL develops its study and research programmes and determines the method of their provision in accordance with the principles of open science (more in 2.2). The [Statutes](#) also provide that written final work of studies must be published in electronic form and be publicly available via the [Repository of the UL](#) after the completion of studies. Peer-reviewed publications by teachers and researchers are also publicly accessible in the Repository, along with research data.

### Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 17)

UL is currently preparing a sustainable development strategy since we aim to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals and to raise awareness on sustainability issues. As part of this strategy, we will focus on three pillars of social participation by including content linked to sustainability goals in the educational process, orienting research in the direction of

sustainability and placing a particular emphasis on the functioning of UL. At the same time, we wish to influence society through our actions and activities by adequately promoting these activities and highlighting UL's role as an important institution for the raising of awareness about the importance of sustainability.

## Impact of changes in the operating environment on the focus of activities

All changes in the operating environment are initially analysed by the competent offices of the Rectorate and then discussed by the College of the Rector, colleges of deans, vice-deans or secretaries, or the competent working bodies and decision-making bodies (UL Senate and/or UL Governing Board). The analyses differ depending on the type of event, e.g. proposals for changes in legislation are analysed with an assessment of the effects of changes on functioning, funding, capacities, etc., after which a response/opinion is drafted. The introduction of new technologies is studied through the competent committees of the UL Senate and potential trial deployment at selected member institutions or the Rectorate; changes and trends in the field of sustainable operation are added to current renovation and operation plans; etc.

## Promoting social impact in educational activities

UL addresses the needs of society, industry and the public sector using a variety of approaches (more in 2.2.) and uses the results of these activities to help define its future direction. UL members are constantly encouraged to renew and update curricula so that it is adapted to changes in society. UL is also reinforcing extracurricular activities which enable students to gain ECTS. In this way, we encourage the active participation of students in various fields (for more, see 1.4).

Through two programmes entitled Student Innovation Projects for Social Benefit and Creative Path to Knowledge, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation and the European Social Fund have co-funded the implementation of projects through which students have been given an additional opportunity to gain practical experience while studying. Under the guidance of mentors, they have sought innovative solutions to the challenges of the industrial and non-industrial sectors in local and regional environments. UL has recognised the importance of such interdisciplinary student projects and also supports their implementation under the Development Pillar of Financing (RSF) 2021–2024.

In 2021, alongside student projects whose implementation is co-funded by the ministry under the ESS (European social fund), UL began implementing interdisciplinary Student projects for sustainable development, with the aim of promoting UL's participation and connection with the environment in the field of sustainable development and contributing to the achievement of SDGs, while at the same time giving students the opportunity to gain new knowledge, competences and practical experience during the course of their studies that will enable them to act in accordance with these goals. As part of the Recovery and Resilience plan, a renewal of higher education study programmes that will incorporate content from the field of sustainability is

being prepared, as is a complete system of micro-credentials that will be offered by UL (more in 1.1). The system of micro-credentials will take its place alongside the existing three cycles leading to educational qualifications as a fourth pillar of education and will represent lifelong learning (LLL) at UL. More than 20 pilot projects for micro-credential programmes are currently in preparation.

Another current example is cooperation with the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia, on the basis of which military modules have been designed for bachelor's study programmes. Slovenia does not have its own system of military education and training, so as part of an interdepartmental agreement a variety of educational content has been prepared for future members of Slovenia's Armed Forces with a range of qualification profiles.

Among the activities promoting social participation and influence is a project called [Modra fakulteta](#), which offers a variety of educational programmes and intergenerational activities to those over-60 and, with their help, researches age and ageing. In this way UL caters for the inclusion of older people in the social environment.

## Strengths

Strengthening the role of experts and scientific arguments in society, disseminating science-based knowledge; giving public responses to issues of societal relevance.

Proactive, strategic, and creative planning and implementation of the UL's communications activities (press conferences, publications, events, guided tours, etc.)

Establishing and improving structures and work processes and coordinating PR activities within the Rectorate and UL Members.

Strengthening the UL network with external stakeholders (NGOs, European and international partners)

## Enhancement areas

Upgrade of the UL's communication through various communication tools: redesigning the UL website.

Integrated, consistent, relevant, and effective communication from the UL, UL Members and staff to the community: develop an editorial policy for UL website and social media, redesign the UL's overall graphic identity.

Scientific and expertise-based activities in science communication.

Systematic and comprehensive follow-up of UL's contribution to the SDGs and development of a strategy in this area.

## 2.1 Managing the societal engagement and impact

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### The University of Ljubljana is well integrated into society

As the largest university in Slovenia, the University of Ljubljana (UL) plays a pivotal role in contributing to societal reforms, specifically through its commitment to education, research, and the active promotion of third mission activities. The UL's strategy 2022-2027 states that the university wants to be a recognised and established academic institution in Europe. Two of its five strategic objectives and related development areas address social engagement and impact. The UL strives to enhance the transfer of knowledge and the arts in all spheres of social life and the university's social role and position in the national and global social dialogue. The strategy includes performance indicators for the strategic objectives and respective development areas. The UL has also prepared a materiality matrix where it has determined the most important challenges and goals relating to social, environmental, and economic sustainability, which the UL will address as part of its mission and strategy. The matrix that was prepared with an extensive number of stakeholders identifies the most important challenges the UL needs to address to contribute to the progress and prosperity of society. According to the self-assessment report, the UL focuses on the three pillars of societal engagement by integrating the content of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the educational process, by orienting research towards sustainable development and by placing particular emphasis on the different activities of the UL.

Based on the audit visit, the UL is well integrated into society on a local and national level. The university is enhancing its societal engagement and impact in many ways, and its interaction with society is versatile and active. The UL's flexibility in addressing societal challenges is evident through its needs-oriented methodologies. The audit team heard about a wide array of activities initiated by different faculties, academies, university management, and units that facilitate engagement with society, demonstrating the university's responsiveness to social needs and priorities. The multitude of activities also creates a vibrant academic and research environment, which enriches the student experience and provides numerous avenues for academic exploration and societal contribution. Special emphasis is placed on connecting the arts, sciences and social sciences and cooperation with external partners.

The university is prominently featured at various events in the city of Ljubljana, on social media, and in the media across the country on an almost daily basis. As highlighted during the audit interviews, the experts of the UL are frequently quoted and interviewed in the media, including continuous appearances in science programme broadcasts by a national television station.

With its 40,000 students and 6,500 employees, the UL has an influential role within the city of Ljubljana. A new agreement and regular meetings with the city of Ljubljana will further

systematise the already active cooperation. At the national level, an agreement on strategic cooperation for technological development and innovation breakthroughs has also been signed by representatives of the government and other parties. The UL is a trusted partner in many areas such as preparing new legislation. The audit team commends all this.

In terms of the management of societal engagement and impact at the university level, the university has a vice rector of knowledge transfer, digitalisation, and sustainable development, as well as the Knowledge Transfer Office established in the previous strategy period.

## Information from the operating environment has an impact on activities in the faculties

Based on the audit visit, the faculties and academies have close connections and active cooperation with external stakeholders, i.e. industry and organisations in their field. Most of the faculties have advisory boards with external stakeholders. With this interaction, the faculties and academies seem to have the ability to react to the new needs arising from industry and overall changes in their operating environment with examples especially related to the educational provision.

However, a more systematic approach to societal engagement would help the UL to be more proactive concerning the needs of society at large and as one university. With a strategic- and future-oriented analysis of changes in its operating environment the UL would be better positioned to be one step ahead. This would entail exploring issues that may not yet be on the business agenda and which may contribute to the future of the operating environment.

## The UL would benefit from clearer goals and the measurement of societal engagement and impact

The annual operational planning (Annual Work Programme) with monitoring, self-assessment and reporting (Business and Quality Assurance Report) at the faculty and university levels ensure a systematic approach in terms of management, implementation and follow up of the university's strategic objectives also linked to societal engagement and impact. There are several university-level quantitative indicators linked to the strategic objectives such as the number of newly established spin-out companies, the number of popular publications on scientific research in the general media, the number of musical productions and exhibitions carried out, the percentage of employees at the UL included in the consultative and decision-making bodies on the national and international levels, the percentage of positive media publications about the UL, the number projects in which students have been solving current social-economic issues, the number of research-development and advisory projects carried out with the business sector or other national/foreign users of knowledge etc.

On the other hand, based on the audit visit, the understanding of what societal engagement and impact meant for the UL was fragmented. Some faculties viewed societal impact narrowly, i.e.



only in terms of media coverage, the measurement of reactions in the media, industry connections, or patents. It was not fully clear to the audit team how the achievements corresponded to the set goals or were based on an analysis linked to the UL's operating environment. The audit team was exposed to a wide range of impressive activities in the faculties. It was quite clear that the university's societal impact was much broader than its current indicators were able to demonstrate. The UL could shift its emphasis from mainly tracking activities to measuring results and impact more diligently. Except for the annual operational planning and reporting process, monitoring of the societal engagement activities was mostly left to the UL faculties and academies. The more specific goals for societal engagement and impact and a data-driven improvement of societal engagement and impact remained unclear.

Societal engagement and impact are broad concepts and thus challenging to define and measure accurately. The UL should have a clear understanding of what societal impact means for the university, as well as the more specific goals for the coming years and how to monitor the achievement of these goals. The audit team recommends that the university further develops university-wide goals for societal engagement and impact linked to activities, follow-up and measurement of activities and a stronger connection to the university-level management system. The UL is also recommended to develop and implement qualitative indicators, in addition to the quantitative ones, to assess and express its societal engagement effectively.

The collaboration with stakeholders at the faculty level should also contribute to a coherent engagement strategy for the UL, in which roles and contributions of key support units could be more clearly defined. It would be beneficial for the university to have a framework for societal engagement incentives in place. Societal engagement criteria should also be incorporated into the academic progression model, such as the habilitation process, or into the researchers' evaluation practices.

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

### - Högskolans självvärdering

As part of its strategy, UL has undertaken to offer support to researchers in the sciences and the arts in communicating the results of their work. UL promotes cooperation between academia, industry, decision-makers, and the non-governmental sector, which is reflected in a range of national, European and other projects.

### Open Science

UL supports open science by incorporating open science principles in UL policy documents and by ensuring conditions that allow research to take place in accordance with open science principles. UL keeps researchers and other open science stakeholders regularly informed via news published on the [UL Open Science](#) website. For detailed information about open science at the UL, [see file](#).

### UL Press

Academic publishing at UL members via the UL Press is rich and diverse (more in 2.4). We currently publish [51 open-access scholarly journals](#) covering all research fields. Authors are not subject to an article processing charge for publishing articles. In total UL publishes around 280 publications a year (monographs, textbooks, manuals, conference proceedings, etc.), which places the UL Press among the three biggest publishing companies in Slovenia in terms of number of publications. More than half of the monographs published by the UL Press are open access, while all other books are available in the [online bookshop](#).

### Research and development

With the [UL Researchers' Career Development Strategy 2012-2016](#) (in Slovene) and the adoption of an Implementation Action Plan, UL committed itself to establishing a centralised university-wide system for informing the academic and general public on an ongoing basis about research topics and research achievements. This commitment is realised via the [Research News](#) website (for more, see 2.4).

In 2022, UL participated in 186 long-term research programmes, 331 national research projects and 661 European and other international research and development projects, in the context of which new knowledge is disseminated within the global research community and communicated to various target groups and the general public. UL is the most successful institution in Slovenia when it comes to obtaining [European Research Council \(ERC\)](#) projects. Of the 22 approved ERC projects, UL is implementing 10 and cooperating in a further five. UL is also the member of The

[Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities](#) with the largest number of projects in Horizon Europe Cluster 5. Many of UL's European research projects also include citizen science (e.g. [SPRINT – Sustainable Plant Production Transition](#) and [WeCount – Citizens Observing Urban Transport](#)).

The university as a whole implements numerous science communication activities to promote the social impact of research activities. UL was one of the organisers of the [first international conference on science communication](#) (in Slovene). Each year UL selects the 10 most outstanding research achievements and we also take part in [European Researchers' Night](#) (in Slovene) events. In conjunction with AGRFT, we produce a television programme called *(Spre)govori znanost* featuring conversations with UL researchers on some of the most urgent issues facing society. UL researchers also appear regularly on *Ugriznimo znanost*, a science programme broadcast by a national television station, with presentations and interviews. UL Members also carry out a range of activities to promote science and their research work.

The [UL Development Fund](#) (in Slovene) provides funding to help researchers improve the quality of their research and prepare excellent applications for project funding under the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

## Ethics and integrity in research

UL adopts a range of approaches to ensure ethics and integrity in research. The [UL Researchers' Code of Ethics](#) lays the foundations of ethical behaviour for teaching staff, researchers and students. By signing a declaration, each individual accepts responsibility to identify ethical issues and obtain guidance or approval from the UL Member Ethics Committee. In the case of interdisciplinary research, researchers can apply for an assessment of the ethical suitability of planned research involving human subjects to the UL Human Research Ethics Committee.

There is also a regular UL framework programme of regular briefings of researchers on values and ethical principles, which is implemented at the level of UL members and through which researchers are also briefed on the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#).

Reports of possible breaches of research integrity can be submitted by staff, students, and others to the UL Ethics Committee, which considers reports and oversees procedures to address breaches of research integrity.

## Knowledge transfer

The [UL Knowledge Transfer Office](#) acts as a key intermediary link between academia and the industry, offering students and researchers services such as identifying potential innovations, legal advice, advice on IP protection strategies, liaison with industry partners and providing training. All relevant knowledge transfer processes relating to the transfer of university knowledge into the broader social context that are carried out at UL are presented in the

[Knowledge Transfer Guide](#). Intellectual property management procedures at UL are regulated by the [Rules on the management of industrial property rights at the University of Ljubljana](#).

With the [UL Innovation Fund](#), UL directly (financially) promotes and encourages the development of university-based knowledge to levels of development suitable for transfer to society. The funds are intended for researchers who have technology or a solution for already identified challenges but lack sufficient resources for prototype development.

In 2022, UL acquired 20 innovations, filed 11 patent applications, and financed the development of four projects with the help of the Innovation Fund. Based on university knowledge, researchers established four spin-out companies. Compared to the previous year, the number of spin-out companies doubled.

## Artistic activity

The recent establishment of the University Office for Artistic Activity follows the development area of the UL strategy by upgrading the support for the transfer of knowledge and arts to all spheres of social life. Through the [UL Arts Fund](#) (in Slovene), UL distributes funds to promote and support additional artistic creation by our students that goes beyond the work done in framework of study programmes. Special emphasis is placed on connecting the arts, sciences and social sciences, cooperation with external partners (public institutions, non-governmental organisations, artistic associations, etc.) and the communicative nature of a project. UL considers the process to be successful, especially from the point of view of involving students in the community and recognising UL's artistic activity within the community.

UL also strengthens the social engagement and influence of artistic activity through cooperation with local and national institutions in the field of the arts and culture (presentation of activities at the [Cultural Bazaar](#), a national cross-sectoral project aimed at promoting arts and cultural education, the [Bobri Festival](#) (in Slovene), a Ljubljana-based festival of cultural and artistic education for children and youth, the [June in Ljubljana](#) (in Slovene) festival. UL has also started publishing [kULturnica](#) (in Slovene) a monthly online magazine dedicated to the arts and culture at UL, and UL has created accounts on social network dedicated to arts at UL. In collaboration with the Bank of Slovenia, UL has launched the [Mala Galerija BS](#) project, which is UL's main exhibition space dedicated to contemporary artistic and cultural practices and the presentation of works by our students.

UL sees opportunities for improvement in monitoring activities, especially through a more systematic overview of the field of artistic activity – in the form of indicators specific for the arts sector.

## Strengths

## Enhancement areas

Compliance of the Repository of the University of Ljubljana with international standards (e.g., the OpenAIRE guidelines). Established open science practices.	Increase the number of publications and amount of research data stored in the Repository of the UL.
The publications are issued under the common name UL Press.	Complete integration of publishing activities under the UL Press label. Increasing the international visibility of UL Press publications.
Successful engagement of UL researchers in many excellent international research projects.	Guided trainings for societal engagement in R&I for researchers. Researchers should be trained to involve societal stakeholders more in their research.
The Human Research Ethics Committee ensures that interdisciplinary research adheres to ethical standards for research involving human subjects. Committee members include representatives from technical faculties who can review research involving users of new technologies.	Increase administrative support for research and research projects.
UL is becoming increasingly important for knowledge transfer to the private sector and for fostering innovation among researchers, which is one of the key indicators of research impact.	Establish knowledge transfer trainings for doctoral students.
Establishment of an Innovation and Development Fund to provide financial and administrative support to researchers in the development of innovations.	Introduce support for non-technological innovations.
Increasing the number of spin-offs.	Enhancing artistic research.
The diversity of artistic fields and subfields, cooperation with local and national institutions in the field of arts and culture.	The indicators of excellence in the arts – modelled on internationally comparable higher education institutions
Involving students in the implementation of all artistic activities.	Establishment of the UL Cultural Heritage Register and its digitalisation Strengthening the discourse on the arts (creating a platform for reflection and debate on the arts, critical evaluation, and theoretical reflection, including the publication of student and pedagogical writings).

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

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### The University of Ljubljana makes a strong contribution to society with its research and artistic activities

The University of Ljubljana (UL) and its research play a major role in society, in terms of reforming it and promoting research. The impact of university research is based on three pillars: the quality and impact of research, the reporting of the impact, and connection with society. The key goal of the societal impact of research at the UL is to make society better with research, increase the relevance of research knowledge and the role of science in society. The university is advancing its position as a leading research institution and is actively engaged in the fabric of societal development through its strategic initiatives in open science, ethical practices, innovation, and community engagement.

Artistic research, notably the newly accredited PhD programmes in arts, highlight the university's engagement with societal impact through the arts. The formation of the Artistic Council, a collaborative effort among academies and faculties, is strategically positioned to underscore the societal importance of artistic research. In addition, artistic contributions, exhibitions, research related fairs and public events underline the UL's commitment and contribution to artistic activities.

As the largest research university in Slovenia, the UL has dedicated support structures that provide a robust foundation for research and innovation. The research impact is led by the vice rectors and various committees. The vice rector for research and development meets the vice-deans of research monthly. The vice rector for knowledge transfer also has a working group for knowledge exchange. According to the audit visit, the UL's knowledge transfer office plays a great role in terms of research impact and other research-related topics. The infrastructure serves as a vital resource for both established researchers and emerging scholars.

The university's infrastructure, policies, and programmes collectively support its vision and strategy for 2022-2027, reinforcing its commitment to excellence and societal impact. However, the large set of activities and established support structures are fragmented and rely often on existing initiatives and those developed over time. The critical review and impact evaluation, institutionalised through monitoring of some key performance indicators, do not lead to continuous development or effects in the case of limited performance or not achieved targets. The audit team recommends that the university defines clearer goals for the research impact, as well as indicators to measure the research impact and ways to improve it.

## The university should integrate quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor research

According to the self-assessment report, the university participates in 186 long-term research programmes, 331 national research projects and 661 European and other international research and development projects. There are also many multidisciplinary projects funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS). However, not every faculty has research programmes. The university's introduction of new calls for research programmes for the next six years that incorporate societal impact measures into the evaluation criteria demonstrates the UL's forward-thinking approach. This strategic inclusion ensures that the research outcomes contribute to academic knowledge and will deliver tangible benefits to society. The audit team recommends that the UL refines ongoing research programme evaluations by incorporating a balanced approach of qualitative and quantitative metrics and establishes transparent methods that address both underperformance and overperformance, such as an internal "Label of Excellence". The university should integrate quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor research, emphasising the societal impact at both university and faculty levels.

## The university's strengths are its commitment to innovation and societal impact

The University of Ljubljana is a member of the EUTOPIA University Alliance. EUTOPIA-TRAIN is a research initiative committed to the creation of a challenge-driven knowledge-creation community that capitalises on the joint potential of the EUTOPIA partners' to promote innovation and societal impact. The EUTOPIA TRAIN initiative has led to the formation of the Citizen Science EUTOPIA Community of Practice, further integrating the UL into the international research community. The UL also has a centralised university-wide system for informing academia and the public on dedicated research topics and achievements via a dedicated website.

The UL showcases several core strengths that are critical to its success as a leading institution of higher learning and research in Slovenia. These strengths highlight the UL's commitment to innovation and societal impact as well as the university's strategic position within the European research landscape and its effective engagement with local and global communities. Some interviewees hoped that the university would find a way to achieve science excellence and develop the best research products globally.

The UL has created an innovation fund, which is a significant step toward bridging the gap between research and innovation. Complementing this, the UL offers support for patenting and business development through specialised support structures and services. The UL provides a 40% share to inventors, a rate that is notably higher than the national legislation requirement, demonstrating the UL's dedication to incentivising innovation. The existence of the innovation fund and an office for the transfer of knowledge highlights the university's dedication to encouraging and supporting innovative endeavours. These resources provide financial and

logistical support for experimental activities. The commitment to innovation is apparent in the encouragement provided by university management and is reflected by grass-root initiatives for the exploration of novel approaches and practice improvement.

According to the audit visit, the UL has established a tradition of celebrating and incentivising innovation through various awards. These accolades recognise the achievements of students and researchers across all disciplines, including the social sciences and humanities, thereby making innovation activities more visible and appreciated within the university community. The UL could establish even stronger links between research and societal engagement in particular innovation activities. The UL should have clearly defined approaches between research and innovation management to identify innovation capacity and potential at an early stage.

## The University of Ljubljana enhances an open science infrastructure and initiatives

The strategy of the UL articulates a clear vision for the university to engage in open science practices, with a comprehensive plan to perform and disseminate research in a manner that is consistent with the principles of open science by the end of 2027. This commitment extends to the responsible and collaborative management of research data and results.

The UL has established a broad array of tools and practices to foster open science and citizen science, and they are supported by university library. The infrastructure includes the UL Repository, Social Science Data Archives, and Common Language Resources and Technology Infrastructure. Additionally, the UL's partnership in the OPERAS research infrastructure underscores its dedication to supporting open access scientific communication, particularly within the social sciences and humanities across the European Research Area. UL has signed the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) declaration. The commitment to open science is further enhanced by the UL's policy of covering article processing charges (APC), enabling academics to publish in open-access journals without incurring additional costs. This approach promotes the dissemination of knowledge and aligns with the principles of open science. Strategic agreements with municipalities and regional businesses highlight the UL's role as a keystone institution in fostering innovation and the adoption of open science practices within the region. The audit team recommends that the UL encourages researchers to adopt the Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable (FAIR) data principles and open science practices, supported by data management across all faculties.

## The university is keen to improve training and support for researchers

The UL provides its staff with access to training activities linked to research and open science. According to the audit visit, the university library and the National Library offer open science courses for doctoral students and staff. Doctoral students also actively participate in the courses. While the offers related to staff development in open science practices are in place, the participation in training activities especially regarding more senior academic staff is not very



high. The audit team also recommends improving the participation rate of senior academic staff in training, such as training in open science and other key skills related to the implementation of the UL strategy. Information concerning these opportunities is disseminated regularly, ensuring that both students and academic staff members are informed and can participate actively.

As a topic, societal engagement should be systematically included in doctoral programmes and the training should be integrated into the monitoring of doctoral students' progress. Doctoral programmes could include training in science communication or assistance in continuous education programmes. Courses on scientific publishing and communications are now available on the university portal.

## The university ensures the responsible conduct of research

The establishment of the UL senate committees on innovation and ethics reflects the strategic emphasis placed on these areas, indicating a robust governance framework that supports these objectives. According to the self-assessment report, the UL Researchers' Code of Ethics provides the basis for ethical behaviour for teaching staff, researchers, and students. The UL has a framework programme of information sessions on values and ethical principles for researchers, which is implemented in the faculties and academies.

According to the self-assessment, researchers also know the European Code of Conduct on Research Integrity. The UL's Human Resources (HR) strategy for researchers, accompanied by a code of conduct for researchers, demonstrates a commitment to upholding ethical standards and fostering a supportive environment for scholarly inquiry. Staff, students, and others may report potential research ethics violations to the UL Ethics Committee, which will process the reports and oversee procedures for dealing with research ethics violations. There is also a student information system, which checks final thesis for plagiarism.

## 2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

### - Högskolans självvärdering

An innovative organisational culture is established through various pilot and development projects, which means the new methods, services and information systems are first tested in a restricted context (at an UL member, within a specific service or in the context of a small number of UL members) and only then transferred to the whole UL.

UL reinforces the sense of belonging and connection of its staff through joint actions, which is particularly important for connecting highly diverse members whose staff feel a stronger attachment to UL Member than to the UL. Cooperation takes place at regular meetings of deans, vice-deans, and secretaries general, meetings with representatives of the UL Student Council and representatives of trade unions, the Slovenian Rectors' Conference, meetings of support services and working groups and sessions of university bodies. The [KUL \(Quality at the University of Ljubljana\)](#) project (in Slovene), through which we have enhanced the quality system in conjunction with UL Members, has played a significant part in strengthening the sense of belonging and connection. The project has involved participatory methods of work through which UL Members and various groups within the university have been collaborating in joint work. We have also developed UL Enhancement-led Visits, an approach to the development of organisational quality which we are now applying regularly (more in 3.3). Forms of training aimed at the entire university community (KUL, [DigiUL](#), [INOVUP](#)), particularly those aimed at different groups of staff simultaneously, have resulted in significantly better connections and a greater sense of belonging to the university in that they strengthen connections and understanding among UL Members and different groups of employees (for more, see 3.2).

The university regularly publishes three internal UL newsletters: one is dedicated to events at UL Members, another is dedicated to events at the Rectorate, and a third is dedicated to cultural events organised by UL Members and the Rectorate. In the spirit of transparency, following meetings of the UL Senate, we send all staff an e-newsletter containing information on the decisions adopted.

The university also organises regular staff meetings, both formal and informal (weekly meeting of the Rector and Secretary General, Rector's New Year's reception, reception on International Women's Day, UL hike on the Path of Remembrance and Comradeship, faculty-to-faculty runs, etc.). Each year we mark the anniversary of our founding with a [University Week](#) (in Slovene), during which prizes are awarded to teaching staff and other staff, students and associates.

### Promoting the use of digital competences and collaboration opportunities

## within the UL community

Along with the activities described in the [DigiUL](#) (for more, see 1.2 and 3.2), we are carrying out pilot updates of individual courses with the didactic use of ICT in collaboration with higher education teachers and other staff. The DigiUL provides support and advice for the introduction of innovative, ICT-supported approaches to learning, the elaboration of study materials and the selection of suitable ICT. It also provides training in the use of the selected ICT or invites participating teachers and other staff to online themed workshops and webinars that are available to all UL staff.

The [Careers Centres](#) offer students a wide range of workshops, training, and individual consultations to help them develop or identify their competences. We encourage students to establish a connection with employers during their studies and devote particular attention to the development of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. For students we hold a regular [“HUD” call for ideas and projects](#) (in Slovene) that is focused on non-technological innovations. In the field of the development of entrepreneurial competences, the [Ljubljana University Incubator](#) is extremely active and offers comprehensive support to newly established businesses.

## Cooperation with alumni

UL maintains contact with its alumni through the UL Alumni Clubs Network, which is made up of 63 alumni clubs from all UL members. The Network currently has more than 13,000 members registered on its online portal [alumniUL](#). Via this portal, UL promotes connections and networking among alumni, continuing education, and other activities (for more, see 2.1 and 2.4). The university also encourages lifelong learning for alumni via alumniUL. To help alumni stay in touch with a particular field, we have created [Alumniteka](#) – a cycle of conversations with UL alumni for UL alumni. In these conversations, up to four alumni from different fields are involved discussing a current social topic.

## Collaboration and co-development with national, regional and international actors and networks

UL's social responsibility can be seen in its cooperation with knowledge users in cultural, economic, and social fields (for more, see 2.1 and 2.2). Social engagement is also expressed via UL's involvement in national and international networks.

At the national level, UL's partnership with the City of Ljubljana is an important and extensive form of cooperation ranging from individual projects to the broader area of social responsibility activities. UL has concluded a cooperation agreement with the Rog Centre, through which it will gain a creative support environment for the development of innovative, socially beneficial projects. Furthermore, UL's connection with Museums and Galleries of Ljubljana (MGML) allows it to use their premises for an exhibition of Student Prešeren Prize winners' final projects.

Also at the national level, an agreement on strategic cooperation for technological development and innovation breakthrough has been signed by representatives of the government, the Rectors' Conference, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and research institutes.

The [UL Global Alumni and Associates Network](#) (SMUL) brings together Slovene scientists, professors and other notable figures working in the academic, research and development fields abroad. It was conceived as an activity to boost the quality of study programmes and strengthen international cooperation.

UL regularly updates its list of [international cooperation agreements](#). Different forms of cooperation are developed at various levels, from the UL level to the level of UL members. International partnerships and networks are an important quality assurance and development tool, since they result in close ties with the best universities in the fields of research, teaching and social participation. Although the focus can vary depending on the specific characteristics of individual networks, in general terms cooperation of this kind means opportunities for additional activities (e.g. joint study modules or virtual mobility), co-creation (joint think tanks, preparation of joint recommendations, new joint initiatives) and better cost effectiveness (by pooling resources). The university also promotes cooperation in the context of EU projects and the Erasmus+ programme, since in this way financial support can be offered to students and staff. The university as a whole will continue to strengthen its activities in the context of [various international networks](#). The aim of all these connections and cooperation is to support the realisation of UL's strategy and promote shared values.

Owing to the large number of agreements signed, the university is currently in the process of consolidating its international network of partners and wishes to focus more on existing partnerships and cooperation within strategically more important international networks and associations (The Guild, Eutopia, EUA, Rectors' Forum of Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans) and regions (Western Balkans, Africa).

### **Strengths**

Strong European and international networks.

Permanent cooperation between the UL Career Centres and UL Alumni.

### **Enhancement areas**

Strengthening collaboration between the Rectorate and UL Members to achieve further alignment and efficiency in performance and implementing changes.

Enhancing cooperation with alumni and improving the potential of the alumni network – strengthening cooperation with UL Alumni at the international level; the possibility of introducing a system of micro-credentials and updating of the catalogues of competences.

Cooperation with the business sector in evaluating potential innovations.

Stronger integration of researchers and industry, especially in the context of developing future-proof professional profiles.

A greater focus on cooperation in strategically important international networks and associations.

## 2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### University actively promotes an innovative organisational culture

According to the audit visit, the higher education community were clearly very proud of their university. At the audit workshop, staff spoke about a sense of belonging to the university and a purpose to their work. The rich variety of disciplines, the culture of openness to different ideas, new insights and moving towards internationalisation were highlighted as strengths of the university. The university was considered as alive, brave, and not afraid of challenges.

Based on the audit visit, the UL demonstrated a commitment to cultivating an innovative organisational culture by encouraging experimental activities within the university and with partners both nationally and internationally. There was a lot of space for grass-root-level innovations and initiatives, to work with local communities, businesses and with international partner universities. The university used a project-based approach often linked to additional funding to promote interdisciplinary projects, upcoming topical issues such as AI, and the personal development of its staff. One of the initiatives included enhancement-led visits to different faculties and academies with the aim to boost quality, exchange practices and to strengthen cooperation within the university (see also the discussion in Chapter 3.3).

Based on the teaching staff workshop, the staff were encouraged to be innovative, to try new ideas, and to develop their knowledge and skills both in research and educational provision. Examples mentioned included the INOVUP teaching and learning workshops, UL support for the digitalisation of teaching and learning, various university- and faculty-level pedagogical and research conferences, and professional faculty gatherings and meetings.

A key strength of the UL was its culture of self-reflection, self-development, and self-renewal. This ethos was embraced across various groups, reflecting a shared commitment to personal and institutional growth. The UL staff were involved and invited to participate actively at the university. There was also clear encouragement for international cooperation and mobility, attending international and national conferences, and various other ways for staying up to date with latest developments and trends. All this strengthened the conditions for a creative atmosphere. On the other hand, a lack of time was mentioned by several interviewees and workshop participants as one of the main obstacles to innovation and attending various offerings at the university. Especially the administrative burden of the academic staff was considered high, as discussed elsewhere in this report.

The UL demonstrated its aspiration to be a learning organisation by actively benchmarking itself against international peers and drawing insights from leading universities worldwide. This was a clear sign of its dedication to ongoing improvement and innovation. On the other hand, there

would be ample opportunities for benchlearning merely within the university. According to the audit visit, there was unused potential at the university in terms of cross-faculty and interdisciplinary collaboration, sharing and learning. This was highlighted by the interviewees and particularly by staff who participated in the audit workshop. There was a desire among the staff to work more together and to get to know each other better within the university. Working more together, the university could achieve much more, learn a lot and much faster, as mentioned in the workshop.

## The university is working in an agile way with its external stakeholders

As discussed above, the UL effectively engages with external stakeholders, including media, industry partners, ministries, and society. The university has a central position in Slovenia and is networked both with public and private sector organisations with many alumni and former academic staff members of the university working in several key positions in the country. The UL is active in transferring its research and activities to the public, e.g., by frequently organising or taking part in events in Ljubljana. Further enhancing public involvement in research and embracing citizen science could facilitate broader engagement and strengthen the societal impact of research projects. Among others, the academic staff highlighted the need to strengthen the role of science and scientific argument in wider society. The cooperation with other universities in Slovenia was less described during the audit visit. Such cooperation takes place through different national networks and collaboration projects, such as the UNI.MINDS project to showcase best practices of collaboration with the commercial sector, and the INOVUP project improving the quality of higher education.

The industry partners described the cooperation with their university partners as very agile for a such a large university. The university's receptiveness to the needs of society and industry when planning study programmes and course content was commendable. Based on the audit, most of the collaboration takes place at the faculty level mainly due to the decentralised nature of the university. Some representatives for external stakeholders and staff considered interdisciplinary projects involving several faculties of the university as challenging due to the different systems in place in each faculty. This is one of the key challenges for the university for the future. The need for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to meet the future needs of the labour market and society were recognised by several interviewees. The university needs to maintain its agility and good existing cooperation with its external stakeholders, but at the same time promote and facilitate more efficient and flexible cross-faculty interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation internally and externally.

## The university actively uses international cooperation and networks for enhancement

The UL's participation in European projects signifies its active role and commitment to the broader European research agenda. The diverse range of projects undertaken by academic staff

across various disciplines highlights the university's capability to contribute to and benefit from the collective European research and innovation efforts. The UL's involvement in international networks, such as EUTOPIA, highlights its commitment to enhancing its activities through global collaborations. This network provides a platform for sharing best practices and insights from partner institutions. The UL has a wide range of international cooperation agreements and over 200 partners globally with the intention to use international partnerships and networks for quality assurance and development. The number of international agreements is not relevant but the quality and content of those agreements. Therefore, the UL's intention to consolidate the international network is encouraged. This would allow more efficient management of agreements and better and systematic evaluation of the impact of the respective cooperation.

## Cooperation with alumni and continuous network management

The UL collaborates with its alumni and utilises the alumni network to enhance its activities. The university's extensive national networks, which include alumni and partnerships with local and regional companies, strengthen its linkage with the outside world. These connections foster collaboration, knowledge exchange and innovation that transcend academic boundaries. Collaboration with the alumni is a significant strength of the UL, and it is evident that this cooperation is robust with 63 alumni clubs integrated into the UL Alumni Clubs Association. Alumni activities are also well integrated into university initiatives. The institution engages the alumni effectively, involving them in mentoring programmes, shadowing, and collaborative activities at both national and international levels. The university leverages its strong alumni network to host networking events, guest lectures, different events and seminars, mentoring programmes, its own surveys, social media accounts, alumni portal and a podcast for alumni called "Alumni Talk" further integrating alumni into its activities. The management of the clubs are supported by organising training events and meetings by the university. While these processes seem more activity-oriented, the university could benefit from a more goal-oriented approach in its alumni and network management. There is room for improvement in the continuous management and updates of alumni and stakeholder networks to ensure their sustained relevance and impact.



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

### - Högskolans självvärdering

#### The Research News platform

A good example of an activity that has successfully improved and enhanced influence in the research and innovation field is the creation and operation of the online platform [Research News](#), which aims to present scientific research, research projects and outstanding researchers at UL in an accessible way to the broadest possible audience both at home and around the world. We devote particular attention to outstanding research achievements, recipients of ERC and MSCA grants, interdisciplinary research and connections between research content and the SDGs. We publish an average of 50 research news items each year. The platform helps raise public awareness of the research and innovation activities of UL researchers and of their important contributions to addressing global social challenges, since UL is among the more successful universities in terms of obtaining European funding for its research projects. Since the platform was created, the number of visitors has grown from 4,481 in 2020 to 25,102 in 2022. In 2022 the highest numbers of readers accessed Research News from Slovenia, followed by the USA, Italy, Germany, India, Turkey, and France.

#### UL Press

The establishment of the UL Press as a joint organisational unit has led to the creation of three web portals: the [UL Press Journals](#) portal, the [UL Press eBooks](#) (in Slovene) portal and the [UL Press Online Bookshop](#). The decision to issue publications from all UL Members under the UL Press imprint has brought increased international visibility. At present around half of UL journals and a third of all UL publications are published under the UL Press imprint. All UL Members have begun using the same information system and have also unified the business model of their publishing activities. This will make it easier to monitor publishing statistics by UL Members (number of publications, number of publications sold, number of views of individual open-access publications, etc.).

#### UNI.MINDS

One of the events that promotes the building of an innovation communities and long-term partnerships between the academia and industry is the [UNI.MINDS](#) festival. The largest festival of its kind in Slovenia, UNI.MINDS is dedicated to showcasing the research and innovation findings of researchers and industry partners from all Slovenian universities. It is focused on empowering, encouraging and supporting various forms of knowledge transfer into wider society, networking by national and international stakeholders from the wider innovation community and, with the

help of awards such as the UL Rector's Award for the best innovation, illuminating outstanding potentials and achievements in the field of the university knowledge transfer to society. The awards are given in three categories: researchers, students and alumni and HUD category (focusing on humanities, arts, and social science projects).

## Entrepreneurial career pathway

UL Careers Centres have prepared an [entrepreneurial career pathway](#) (in Slovene) with a diverse range of contents, workshops, lectures and events that help students from all cycles to learn about entrepreneurship and gain the competences necessary for entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial career path is divided into three sections: 1. Entering the world of entrepreneurship, 2. Basics of entrepreneurship, and 3. Different types of entrepreneurship. The first section brings together video content, books, and advice on entrepreneurship, the second section consists of workshops and webinars on developing an idea, funding for business starters and communication skills, and the third section consists of workshops covering different types of enterprise (start-up, deep tech, social, family, freelance cultural worker and traditional enterprise) and the opportunities that exist in the market.

## Alumni for students mentoring programme (job shadowing)

The aim of this mentoring programme is to offer students new forms of informal mentoring, above all in the form of job shadowing, and give alumni either the opportunity to pass on their experience and knowledge to their younger colleagues. Alumni offer students the chance to visit their working environment for a day, which gives students the opportunity to get to know their work and career path, which in turn can help them make their own career decisions. The essence of the programme is that the student observes the alumnus's work process for a short time and learns about what their job involves, which makes it easier for them to decide if this is a career path they would like to follow.

The programme is run via the alumniUL portal, where students and alumni who wish to participate can register. Matching students and alumni is done by coordinators at UL Members with the help of an algorithm that proposes the most suitable mentors for the mentees. When a mentor and mentee are matched, they are guided through the mentoring process by milestones that indicate how to progress. The mentoring programme was implemented for the first time in 2022. A total of 214 mentoring pairs were formed (the target was at least 150) and all participants gave positive feedback. Students obtained information about interesting jobs and in some cases were offered student jobs. The alumni, for their part, gained insight into the current state of their profession and potential new contacts with a new generation of professionals.

## Examples of good practice in the use of ICT in higher education

The DigiUL has created a [collection of examples of good practices in the use of ICT](#) (in Slovene) in higher education in various subject areas at UL and abroad.

## A day for the arts at UL

This collaboration provides an opportunity to showcase all UL Members working in the arts at the same time, deepening collaboration, and networking. The event is held as part of the free festival June in Ljubljana in the city centre in front of the UL building, extending information to the general public and further strengthening cooperation with the community.

## 3 HEI enhances quality and well-being

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

*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 wellbeing of the staff are also assessed.*

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

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

#### **Strengths**

- The quality system is linked to the implementation of the strategy at the levels of the university, faculties, academies, and services. Dedicated instruments, such as the institutional strategic plan and action plans, annual reporting, and self-assessments, ensure a systematic institutional approach to quality assurance and enhancement.
- The University of Ljubljana's quality system respects the diversity of faculties and academies.
- The university provides opportunities for staff development, and the procedures for staff recruitment are transparent.

#### **Recommendations**

- The university's fragmented structure challenges the effectiveness of the common quality system. The university should look for synergies in its existing structures, processes and responsibilities related to quality assurance and enhancement to overcome overlaps and inefficiency in its use of resources.
- Common data management practices, reporting and integrated data sources would support more coherent processes and quality management at the university.
- The university should have a more systematic approach to measuring and developing staff wellbeing.

## 3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

### - Högskolans självvärdering

#### Using the quality system in the management and implementation of the strategy

In 2020 the UL began drawing up a new strategy, the [University of Ljubljana Strategy 2022-2027](#), which is currently being implemented. The process of preparing the strategy brought together members of the UL academic community, representatives of trade unions and a large number of external stakeholders with the aim of devising development activities that would help consolidate UL as a recognised and established academic institution in Europe. After the new strategy was approved by the UL Senate, UL Members were invited to integrate the UL strategic objectives into their own. An action plan was also prepared as the basis for developing further activities, along with a plan for monitoring implementation and achievement of the objectives.

The [quality assurance system](#) covers all key activities at UL. The Work Programme encompasses regular annual UL planning. Business and Quality Assurance Report includes regular [annual UL self-evaluation](#) (see Figure 1). Both documents are connected to the strategic objectives and area-specific strategic activities. As part of annual business reporting, UL chiefly monitors fulfilment of the annual plan, which is drawn up on the basis of the strategy guidelines. The self-evaluation findings are included in the [Business and Quality Assurance report](#) drafted at each UL Member, at the Rectorate and for the whole UL. At UL level, data is collected from UL Members and other sources (internal and external databases). Using a uniform methodology, this data is converted into indicators for whole UL and for individual UL Members; this ensures that values are measured uniformly and can be compared across UL Members.



Figure 1. Annual self-evaluation process of UL

In UL self-evaluation, special emphasis is placed on monitoring fulfilment of the measures set, and the UL has introduced a UL reporting application to support the monitoring process (for more, see 1.4). UL also provides annual training for staff at the Rectorate and at UL Members on strategic planning and the proper formulation of measures. This further strengthens the planning process (e.g. [formulation of measures to improve business processes at UL Members](#)) (in Slovene). Prior to every reporting round, the university organises a workshop for UL Members' contact persons at which we present any changes to the UL self-evaluation process. The planning and self-evaluation process is continuously updated to ensure that the process is coherent and effective.

[Interim evaluations](#) of the UL strategy enable us to acquire multiannual insight of the status of fulfilment of the strategy (2012–2016 and 2017–2020 have been evaluated). During this evaluation period, one year after approval of the strategy, a strategic meeting of all UL Member deans was held to identify, for each UL Member: a) how they had contributed to realisation of the UL strategic objectives in the past year; b) which activities they would carry out in support of the realisation of the objectives in the next two years; c) which systemic measures the Rectorate would have to take in support of UL Members' strategic plans.

The establishment of a department for supporting strategic management within the University

Quality Assurance Office and Strategic Management Support in 2023 will ensure that additional focus is placed in future on monitoring strategy implementation at UL level.

## Ensuring staff members are aware of the connection between their own work and the university's strategic objectives

The UL strategy has been made public. A variety of stakeholders were involved in formulating the strategy. The Third-Generation Balanced Scorecard method was applied as the basic approach to strategy development. Carefully structured, it began by identifying key stakeholders' expectations. Eighteen interviews were held at the Rectorate (rector, rector's assistants, vice-rectors, chair of the UL Governing Board, secretary-general, secretary-general's assistants and other leading staff), along with 27 interviews with UL Member heads (deans, vice-deans). The analytical findings from the 45 interviews were a starting point for the strategic workshops, which were attended by an average of 30–35 UL Member representatives (deans, vice-deans, secretaries, other representatives). In the initial part of the process, we worked with more than 4,000 stakeholders (staff, students and representatives of the wider society in the humanities, art, education, healthcare, business, agriculture, sport, public administration and R&D) to address some of the most important sustainable challenges (social, environmental and economic). This formed the basis for the production of a materiality matrix, which has played a major role in guiding development of the new strategy. For more information on formulation of the strategy, see [UL Strategy 2022–2027](#) (Annex 1: The process of drawing up the University of Ljubljana Strategy, 2022–2027, page 36).

UL leadership have prepared a workshop for UL Member deans at which agreements on key strategic issues of future UL operations are adopted and a strategy implementation action plan drafted.

Staff are involved in formulating the work programme, which includes strategic objectives in their respective areas; they also take part in self-evaluations of their activities during the preparation of the Business and Quality Assurance Report and of the self-evaluation reports for study programmes. The key points of the strategy will be shown in the UL reporting application and therefore always available to view. Annual reporting will also be aligned with the points of the strategy.

### Strengths

A modern and methodically thought-out strategy development process.

An inclusive process for development of the Materiality Matrix, vision and strategy.

### Enhancement areas

Increasing the visibility of the UL's strategic goals to employees to further align planning and implementation activities with strategic goals.

Integrating data sources and developing a platform for data collection, analysis and reporting to support strategic management.

Strategic goals are used for annual planning, monitoring and improvement.	Better aligning strategic goals, selection and implementation of development pillar of financing (RSF) projects with the quality system, to achieve greater synergies in implementing activities and pursuing strategic goals.
UL Members follow carefully managed processes to cascade strategic goals.	Stronger alignment of the UL Business and Quality Assurance Report with the Materiality Matrix, Strategic Goals, and Development and Support Areas of the UL Strategy.



## 3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### The university's quality policy forms a common basis for quality work

The quality system rules of the University of Ljubljana outline the university's quality policy. The quality policy includes the main principles and objectives, processes, and responsibilities of the quality system. The quality policy is publicly available on the university's website but could be more clearly highlighted on the web pages. In addition, the university could also further specify the roles and responsibilities related to quality system and enhancement covering the whole institution. The responsibilities of individual staff members in quality enhancement could also be highlighted in the quality system rules.

The university's annual Business and Quality Assurance Report of 2022 indicated that there is still a need to promote the quality system principles and responsibilities among staff members. Based on the audit visit, the university had already taken steps forward to raise awareness of the quality system among its staff. The university could further build the staff awareness of the university's quality policy and the idea of quality enhancement being everyone's responsibility. This requires that the key principles are systematically communicated at various levels of the university especially by the management.

The purpose of the university's quality system is to ensure that the university meets targets set in its strategy and statutes as well as the European (ESG) and national quality assurance standards in place for higher education. The objectives of the quality system include the production of monitoring data and periodic reports on the quality of activities and the achievement of objectives, as well as the implementation of measures to improve these elements, and the development of a quality culture at the university. The system is based on a framework of continuous improvement, a so-called Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. The system is structured in a way that supports the profile of the university and respects the diversity of faculties and academies. Different practices among the UL faculties and academies are allowed when appropriate and when they are in line with the functioning of the quality system. Dedicated instruments, such as the institutional strategic plan and action plans, annual planning, reporting and self-assessment, ensure a systematic institutional approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

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

The university's strategy for 2022-2027 is ambitious, comprehensive, and detailed. The strategy was prepared with a wide range of stakeholders. Measures have been set out to achieve the

objectives of the strategy. Responsible persons, timelines and indicators have been identified for these strategy measures. The quality system is linked to the implementation of the strategy at the levels of the university, faculties, academies, and services.

According to the audit visit, the strategy is a living document integrated in educational provision, research, and societal engagement. Commitment to the implementation of the strategy in the different faculties and units of the university is essential for its realisation. The audit visit underlined that the university's 26 faculties and academies are very autonomous, called "worlds on their own" during the audit visit. On the other hand, staff identified themselves also as part of the university as a whole and not only as part of their respective faculty or academy. There was clear awareness of the strategic objectives of the university among the staff, and the common objectives were considered to unite them all.

### Data-based management could be further enhanced

The harmonisation of the information systems within the university is an ongoing process. The different information systems in place in the faculties and academies and the challenges related to them were brought up in interviews with staff and students. The different information systems appear to have created unnecessary boundaries and ineffectiveness in the university. An achievement has been the implementation of a common business information system SAP with links to other internal and external systems in faculties and academies. This has been a very positive development to improve the flow of information and communication at the university, as recognised in interviews and the Annual business and quality assurance report of 2022. In terms of reporting platforms, a UL reporting application for the Annual Work Programme, business reporting, and self-evaluation of study programmes, was introduced for the faculties in 2020. The platform will hopefully further enhance a shared structure, synergies and transparency within the university.

The implementation of the university's strategy needs to be supported by effective knowledge and data-based management structures and systems. Although the university has identified this as an improvement area in its self-assessment report, the discussions during the audit visit showed relatively little evidence of university-level knowledge management practices except for some indicators. To ensure systematic implementation of the university's strategy and evidence-based decision making, the audit team recommends that the university further develops data management and reporting related to students, staff, research, and societal impact. Common data management practices and integrated data sources would support more coherent approaches and quality management processes. Integrated data sources and reporting would increase transparency and reliability and allow for a systematic review and comparison of faculty activities in the implementation of the university's strategy.

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

### - Högskolans självvärdering

#### Identifying development needs in staff competences (e.g. pedagogical competence)

UL defined the main areas and action points in the area of the development of such competences in the [UL Strategy](#) 2022-2027 and [UL HRS4R](#) (UL HR Strategy for Researchers and Teachers 2021-2023).

Needs and wishes for further training are identified in tandem with teachers' and researchers' personal annual plans and with the annual interviews. Teachers and researchers have their career paths determined by the UL [Criteria for Appointment](#). These criteria include the flexibility needed for various fields of research. While teaching excellence indicators are available to teaching staff for monitoring and development, their proper insertion into the system is still pending.

The identification of the needed competences is reflected in recruitment calls and the appointment of visiting teachers and researchers.

UL collects and analyses feedback from training programme participants, who report on their wishes and needs for additional skills and competencies. More extensive studies of needs for additional competencies are occasionally carried out (e.g. [Digital University](#), [INOVUP](#)).

Development needs in the field of UL competencies are monitored with active staff participation (regular tasks, participation in national and international projects/networks, e.g. EUA, The Guild, EUTOPIA).

#### Supporting the development of staff competences

UL recently implemented all major HR modules of the SAP information system. A recruiting module with onboarding, competence models and training is planned as the next step. This will enable systemic support of the development of staff competences.

Staff competences are developed through specific and general training needed by employees (including both internal as well as external training), through international mobility programmes (supported by the International Offices), as well as in projects and more regularly through on the job learning.

UL provides various training programmes, some of which are (primarily) designed for specific

groups and others for everyone. Training is provided for the development of general competencies: communication skills, cooperation, management, taking better care of one's health, ICT skills and foreign language knowledge (or teaching and general purposes), etc. (examples include the [Quality Culture Programme and INOVUP](#), [Digital University](#), ULTRA), for inclusivity and acceptance of diversity, for research, [for R&D](#) (in Slovene), [for knowledge transfer](#) (in Slovene), and for entrepreneurship.

All new hires, including foreigners, are given the opportunity to get acquainted with all the relevant regulations, rules and instructions, including the related ethical codes and the [Equality Plan of the University of Ljubljana for the period 2022-2027](#). New hires have a formal probationary period with defined relevant work areas and actions.

## Ensuring fairness and transparency in staff recruitment and development procedures

Recruitment at the UL is based on local national labour laws, the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The UL has also adopted its own regulations for the recruitment of researchers and professors. All vacancy announcements are published on the UL internet portal, while teaching and research positions are published on the EURAXESS global online platform. Applicants are selected by a panel of experts chosen by the dean of a UL Member, and unsuccessful applicants have the opportunity to appeal.

The hiring of researchers and faculty is tied to titles earned through a habilitation process. In 2014, the UL introduced the possibility of obtaining a temporary academic and research title, which allows foreign nationals and others without a UL title to obtain the corresponding UL title.

UL ensures that staff development is fair and transparent by making vacancies and opportunities for activities public. Staff are able to see their regular performance assessments. In cases of stress or unfair treatment, staff can turn to their superior or 'trusted person'; procedures are also in place for dealing with workshop bullying and for appealing against an assessment. Membership of sectoral trade unions provides staff with legal advice and protection.

## Ensuring the well-being of staff

UL fosters a good work-life balance and encourages psychophysically healthy lifestyles and good cooperation between staff (for more, see 2.3), with students and more widely.

UL has health promotion programmes (e.g. at the Rectorate), while UL Members have similar programmes/activities. Examples of activities include weekly exercise sessions, the promotion of active breaks during work, [a psychosocial counselling service](#) (in Slovene), [mental health promotion workshops](#), and events to promote healthy lifestyles and socialising (recreational exercises).

There are a number of provisions, checks and balances that ensure a good work-life balance in accordance with the opportunities and provisions of the relevant labour laws. One recent improvement was implementation of the UL's Work from Home Policy.

UL has developed a questionnaire and recommendations for monitoring staff satisfaction (2015). UL Members are free to adapt the questionnaire to their circumstances or use other tools.

The training provided at UL level and [UL enhancement-led visits](#) promotes collaborative skills; participants notice that they work more collaboratively and that the training has a positive impact on their satisfaction and well-being.

## Procedures for ensuring the equal and non-discriminatory treatment of staff

The [Equality Plan of the University of Ljubljana for the period 2022-2027](#) addresses the area of gender equality and aims to create a working and learning environment that is sensitive to gender and other forms of discrimination or bias, as well as other characteristics that may result in employees and students being treated less favourably and therefore having fewer opportunities to succeed and participate in all processes at the UL and UL Member level. The UL actively promotes gender equality, primarily through the participation of its Members in research and other national and international gender equality projects.

The [Rules for action against violence, harassment and bullying - University of Ljubljana](#) (2022), apply to conduct that constitutes discrimination on the basis of personal circumstances. To support this, UL introduced the institute of the "trusted person", appointed at each UL Member (26) and the Rectorate (1).

Equal treatment and non-discrimination are also ensured through the recruitment process based on the [OTMR](#) principles.

### Strengths

The implementation of the SAP information system in HR will be completed in all 26 UL Members in 2023. This will streamline HR processes across the UL, supported by a single information system that will enable staff to focus their efforts on important areas and spend less time on administrative tasks.

### Enhancement areas

A training and development competency model will first be developed for staff of the Rectorate, then of the UL, and then for researchers, enabling tracking assessment of competences and planning their development.

Implementation of the module of personnel development within the SAP information system, which includes training (general and pedagogical) and will enable integration or connection of different existing systems into SAP.

Implementation of the INOVUP project, which provided intensive pedagogical training and study visits by multipliers to learn about didactics at foreign universities and the practice of knowledge transfer. Implementation of other development projects to improve the study process.

The UL provides a wide range of relevant and well-rated training for all employees. Most of the training is focused on skills development (and most is not lecture-based).

Integration and enhancement of existing activities to support the development of didactic competencies within the Centre for Pedagogical Training.

Integration and enhancement of existing activities to develop general skills (communication, leadership, psychophysical health care) for all employees and specific groups (e.g. the Quality Culture Programme and training for the managers of UL Members).

Collecting regular employee satisfaction feedback and using the results to address challenges at various organisational levels, then informing employees of the results and improvements.

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

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### The UL needs a more strategic approach to competence development

One of the support areas of the UL strategy is to support staff development. The UL has conducted several initiatives during the previous strategy period and from there on lately the Digital University and ULTRA (a project from the Recovery and Resilience Plan 2022–2025) to enhance support for staff development. In addition, international mobility is encouraged.

Based on the audit visit, faculties and academies have introduced annual discussions with staff and are conducting surveys to identify development needs. These discussions are considered when planning future training. However, the interviews indicated that the practices vary between faculties and academies, and it was not clear to the audit team if development discussions are carried out systematically and at a sufficient level in all faculties and academies.

Through staff training, the UL has facilitated employee development of specific knowledge and skills necessary to monitor and assure quality, i.e., courses in ICT, digitalisation, and communication. Based on the audit visit, it could be seen that there are a wide range of courses available for academic staff to support their pedagogical skills and other courses for administrative staff to support competences that they need. There are also opportunities for administrative staff to take part in Erasmus exchange programmes. However, attending courses is optional in most of the faculties, and there appears not to be a systematic follow up on participation and impact of the training. Based on the audit interviews, lack of time and incentives affect participation, and practices appear to vary a lot between faculties and academies.

The UL has recognised the need for a competence model for its staff. The audit team stresses the need for an institutional approach to competence development. In addition, the staff should systematically have time and opportunities to attend some staff development and training. Audit team recommends making staff development and training compulsory for teaching staff including full professors. The audit team encourages the university to use the recently introduced SAP for monitoring staff participation in competence development training and ensuring that the training is set at a sufficient level. In addition to pedagogical skills, the training could more address future skills, such as teaching entrepreneurial skills to students. The training could also be further aligned with the strategic goals of the university.

## A systematic approach to measuring and developing staff wellbeing is needed

One of the strategic development areas of the UL strategy is to promote an accessible, inclusive, and equal academic environment. The UL's strategic goal is to become an academic institution that serves as a role model in respecting diversity. In addition to national laws and EU regulation, the UL has its own regulations for the recruitment of researchers and professors. HR rules for recruitment are at the university level, and there are committees concerning hiring processes with external members to ensure fair treatment of all applicants. The habilitation process is transparent and open, and it applies across the university. According to the audit visit, some faculties have challenges to attract enough qualified staff to work at the university and in teaching positions.

The university has an equality plan for the strategy period 2022-2023 that addresses gender equality. Based on the audit visit, it could be clearly seen that the UL actively promotes gender equality through the participation of its members in research. However, based on the university's self-assessment and audit visit, diversity, equality, and inclusivity could be better integrated in managing and developing the activities of the UL and its faculties. This is necessary for the UL to become a truly global player, promoting SDGs and helping society to transform itself into a society of the future. For example, it is unclear how the strategic activity of adopting a public commitment from the staff and students to proactive and consistent conduct in embracing diversity takes place.

According to the audit visit, staff wellbeing is maintained through good working conditions and working tools, different discussion sessions, meetings, lectures, information sessions and workshops, renewed teaching methods, various informal meetings, and events, such as celebrations and sport activities. As mentioned, all faculties conduct staff surveys annually and the results of the surveys are used to improve the wellbeing of the staff. On the other hand, based on self-assessment report and audit visit, it was not clear who is responsible for staff wellbeing at the university level. Both HR and quality management seem to have some responsibility, but the audit team found no evidence that the roles are adequately determined and get the attention they deserve.

Collecting and using data at the university level could be further improved. There is lack of data about psychosocial stress at university, which makes it difficult to take necessary measures or ensure staff access to the right activities. In the fierce competition for talent, and to make academic careers more attractive, the audit team recommends that human resources including staff wellbeing remain high on the management's agenda.



## 3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

### - Högskolans självvärdering

#### Quality system supporting the achievement of the objectives set for the core duties and the enhancement of the core duties

The [UL quality assurance \(QA\) system](#) encompasses all key and support activities at UL ([see Article 5](#)). Planning, monitoring and reporting take place annually with the preparation of the [work programme, the business and quality assurance report, and the accounting report](#), first at UL Members and the Rectorate and then in a joint plan and report. Different areas, activities and UL Members supplement the UL indicators and quality assurance system with extra indicators, tools and analyses.

UL encourages responsibility to reflect on areas and to prepare measures for improvements. The following are identified at the end of every chapter of the business report:

- key improvements and good practices within the area and impact on quality;
- key threats and weaknesses and the objectives and proposals for measures associated with them.

UL focuses strongly on the self-evaluation of study programmes (for more, see 1.3), which includes the planning of measures for improvements. The university also encourages quality improvements at organisational level through UL enhancement-led visits, which support UL Members in their efforts to improve quality (for more, see 3.4).

#### Enhancement and dissemination of good practices

When we encounter challenges that need to be addressed at joint level and search for possible solutions, we consider UL experiences, needs and good practices, as well as the experiences of other institutions. In this manner we have developed several tools and approaches within the quality assurance system. UL's aim is to identify, learn from, adapt and upgrade a good practice. The university is attentive to the common points of the wide application of practice as well as whether it is sufficiently flexible and can be adapted/implemented at different UL Members. Therefore, UL emphasises advancement and adaptation of practices in our context before their dissemination.

Some examples:

- UL has developed [monitoring of study programme quality](#) based on an analysis of the situation within UL, case studies from abroad and coordination with UL Members.
- UL has developed [student surveys](#) (2014) in response to initiatives and comments from UL

Members and on the basis of the upgrading of the existing survey and the UL EF survey, and other relevant sources. The upgrade proposals were coordinated with faculties and student representatives, and adopted the new [rules \(in Slovenian\)](#), in which we emphasised the use of survey results.

- Monitoring of staff satisfaction: we proceeded from the tools that the UL Members had already developed, and drafted a questionnaire and guidelines that can be used by all UL Members.
- [UL enhancement-led visits](#): The university has applied good practices and cooperative management approaches outside UL, and developed the enhancement-led visits approach with UL Members. These are aimed at improving organisational quality at UL Member level. Based on the positive results of the pilot programme, enhancement-led visits were introduced into the UL quality assurance system.

## Supporting a participatory quality culture and enhancement of our activities

UL works intensively with internal and external stakeholders. Staff and students work together in representative bodies (committees, senates, working groups and other activities). The university encourages a collaborative quality culture at UL, addressing challenges and searching for solutions with UL Members and improving UL activities. To this end we hold regular meetings (for more, see 2.3). In addition to regular meetings, we set up relevant working groups as required (e.g. introduction of SAP, preparation for the Informativa fair, and the NES, teaching excellence, competencies and part-time study working groups, etc.). Cooperation is deepened through joint project work and in joint training programmes, with [UL enhancement-led visits](#) playing a particularly useful role. Through these joint activities, we are developing a common UL identity at a highly diverse institution.

External stakeholders are involved in quality assurance development and, formally and informally, in regular operations and improvement processes. This provides us with prompt and detailed feedback in R&D, artistic work, study and extracurricular activities, and collaboration in the further development of UL activities.

## Ensuring the quality system meets the objectives set for it

The QA system meets the objectives set in the [Quality System Rules of the UL](#).

- The system facilitates closing the quality loops (PDCA) with the continuous monitoring of all activities on the basis of indicators, evaluation, reporting and improvement measures.
- The system brings together the strategic and implementational dimensions of UL.
- The system operates at various levels, thereby establishing a common framework for different activities/levels within UL. It facilitates links between very diverse UL Members and other units and, with it, a certain degree of comparability.
- At the same time, the system fosters the necessary flexibility by complementing the

general framework with the specific.

- The system enables the planning, monitoring and improvement of areas of relevance to the fulfilment of ESG and other important criteria and objectives set out in laws, secondary legislation and at UL.
- The system provides for the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in monitoring and improving activities, and the provision of information to them.
- The system encourages development of a common quality culture.

## Developing the quality system

UL largely developed the QA system during the [KUL \(Quality at the University of Ljubljana\)](#) (in Slovene), where the university renewed, supplemented and tried to make sense of the existing basis, redesigned existing tools and added new ones. In accordance with the KUL project, the university computerised the student survey. The university has recently supported the monitoring of study programmes with an application, and used that application to also support UL Members' annual planning and reporting. UL is gradually increasing the range of available data important for the self-evaluation of UL Members and study programmes (for more, see 1.3).

UL is also planning to redesign the student survey and the monitoring of graduates' employment outcomes. Enhancement-led visits at UL Members help develop the quality assurance system (for more, see 3.4). One of the four topics addressed during a visit relates to the development of the quality assurance system at the UL Member.

While the quality assurance system is a good basis for achieving the objectives set, continued and extended consideration must be given to the way it works, with information-provision and the inclusion of different groups in its operation. Over the last decade UL has developed and upgraded the system significantly, which has helped the university to start establishing a common quality culture at a highly diverse university.

It is important that the tools and processes of the quality assurance system continue to be improved and simplified where possible (e.g. annual self-evaluations, student surveys) to make participation in its operation easier.

### Strengths

A common framework for a quality system at university level which also enables sufficient flexibility.

### Enhancement areas

Greater involvement of diverse groups of staff, students, and external stakeholders in the functioning of the quality system.

Developing the quality system and new tools in dialogue with UL members and stakeholders. Therefore, in the decentralised university context, we develop common processes and tools that also provide sufficient flexibility for the diversity of UL Members.

Development and implementation of UL enhancement-led visits, which strengthen constructive communication among the participants and create a more collaborative and constructive quality culture at the UL, using participatory management methods and taking advantage of otherwise unused potential.

The quality system should be more integrated into the ongoing activities and improvement of the activities of UL members and the UL, and the following steps can be made to achieve this:

- make self-evaluations more meaningful and involve different groups in reflection and improvement actions;
- improve the availability and relevance of information to stakeholders (e.g., responses to student and staff feedback, informing about the conclusions to analyses, information on implemented and planned improvements, meetings with UL Members, etc.);
- development of an integrated quality mindset and quality culture;
- monitoring, reflecting and improving activities and the organisation as part of regular operations (ownership), rather than as something external to the department, UL Member, etc.

Broadening the use of collaborative and constructive approaches in UL enhancement-led visits, which can be done in the following ways:

- addressing common UL challenges, including in setting up innovative learning environments and dynamic collaboration with the community;
- at UL Members;
- at the Rectorate.

Broadening participatory and reflective self-evaluation practices: conducting self-evaluations (e.g. study programmes or areas) as a collaborative and shared effort (e.g., of a department, UL Member), that engages various relevant groups in relevant ways in the reflection and improvement planning phase, in addition to incorporating their feedback into the process.

Increasing the use of the evaluation results for further improvement measures; any planned activities should mainly be derived from the self-evaluation results.

## 3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### The university's quality system ensures a systematic approach to quality management

The UL has a comprehensive quality system, including the university level, faculties and academies, and services. There are established and clear annual processes to identify objectives and development priorities, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation covering both the university and faculty levels. At the core of the process are the university's mission, vision and strategic objectives, and the annual priorities and targets set in the Annual Work Programme.

The UL and its faculties and academies annually self-assess the progress made in implementing the strategy and the annual plan. All study programmes also carry out a self-assessment annually or at least biannually (see also the discussion in chapter 1.3). The annual process in place, with self-assessment and openly highlighting improvements and successes as well as threats, weaknesses, and measures in connection with those in the annual Business and Quality Assurance Report is to be commended.

The process covers education, research and development, artistic activities, transfer and application of knowledge, other operations, and quality system management and development. There is evidence that the process supports the university in meeting its strategic ambitions and enhancing its activities. The process engages various levels and actors as well as the numerous bodies of the university. There was also evidence of systematic follow-up and a continuous cycle of improvement in line with the PDCA. As the core process of the quality system, this succeeds in creating a common structure, setting priorities and targets, and following up activities in an otherwise diverse and decentralised organisation.

Other key processes of the quality system include different surveys (students, graduates, employees), internal enhancement-led visits, as well as external national and international institutional and programme accreditations and evaluations. The enhancement-led visits with their aim to support the UL faculties in their efforts to boost quality, exchange of practices and strengthening cooperation within the UL appear as a very positive initiative. As a process it could also respond to some of the needs highlighted in this report to enhance collaboration and cross-faculty learning. The enhancement-led visits were, however, little mentioned during the audit visit, indicating that their role in the quality system could be strengthened and better communicated. The enhancement-led visits could also engage staff more widely in the faculties and academies.

The university's quality system covers the education and teaching of the university well.

Research and societal engagement and impact could be more clearly incorporated in the description of the quality system which is now more focused on education. Especially the area of societal engagement and impact needs to be better incorporated in the management and quality system, as discussed in Chapter 2.1.

While the quality system and the information produced by it helps the university to recognise development needs and to enhance its activities in a goal-oriented manner, there were indications of shortcomings not always picked up by the system. In terms of the overall quality system of the university, the Act-phase and the subsequent follow up of actions taken needs to be improved in the PDCA cycle.

## The university's structure challenges the effectiveness of the common quality system

As mentioned previously in this report, the UL faculties and academies are very autonomous. The fragmented nature of the university organisation challenges the effectiveness of the common quality system. There is a complex committee structure with meeting heaviness and mirrored systems at the faculty and university levels. Due to the organisation of the university, there is overlap in quality management at different levels creating ineffectiveness in the system in terms of decision-making, resources used and quality management in general. Based on the audit visit, it was not always clear who is responsible for institutional-level shortcomings and challenges in relation to the quality of activities. At the faculty level, the system can appear burdensome, although the quality system allows for different practices and faculty-specific applications.

The audit team recommends that the university looks for synergies in its existing structures, processes and responsibilities related to quality assurance and enhancement to overcome overlaps and to some extent inefficiency in its use of resources. By clarifying the organisational structure, common quality system, responsibilities, and by streamlining processes the university could make its quality system more effective. Leaner structures would allow more resources in faculties and academies to be used for the core activities of research and education. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the strengths of the system, that is, its flexibility in meeting the needs of the diverse faculties and the broad engagement of staff and students in the processes, is guarded.

## Quality culture of the university is participatory and open

The university shows maturity in its capabilities for self-reflection, not being afraid of highlighting its weaknesses and areas for enhancement openly. The audit visit confirmed that there is a strong desire for development at different levels of the university. The individuals met by the audit team expressed confidence in the university's status as an excellent university, and there was a shared ambition to stay at the cutting edge and take the university forward.

One of the key objectives of the UL's quality system has been to strengthen the quality culture at

the university. The UL has, among others, used training, self-assessments, and enhancement-led approaches to support the faculties and staff members in this. The university appeared to have embraced many of the key principles of the enhancement-led approach in its quality work, such as engagement, ownership, interaction, and collaboration. The university has provided good opportunities for staff, students, and external stakeholders to engage in quality enhancement of the university's activities through various formal and informal structures. According to the audit visit, students' voices are well heard at the university and faculty levels. Students are well represented in the official bodies of the university and their opinions are also heard, for instance, in the habilitation processes.

The university has several quality committees, and the deans meet regularly with the university management. The advisory boards of the faculties have an important role in bringing external insights. Their presence ensures that a wide range of perspectives and expertise is integrated into the decision-making processes. The audit team recommends that advisory boards are established in every faculty.

The university's quality system has been developed in a systematic manner. As mentioned in the self-assessment report, the university has developed and upgraded the quality system significantly over the last decade. The audit visit confirmed that the university is flexible and receptive to feedback from the faculties and academies, staff, and students, and is continuously trying to improve its quality processes to meet the needs at different levels of the university where possible.

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

### - Högskolans självvärdering

#### Development and implementation of enhancement-led visits

[Enhancement-led visits](#) are aimed at strengthening organisational quality at UL Members; they also help them to plan improvements in those areas in which they wish to make progress. For UL Members, enhancement-led visits are useful from a number of aspects. During preparation, they perform a SWOT analysis of the quality assurance system and review progress by activity over three years. On this basis, they choose four topics where they wish to make improvements, then identify possible solutions and dilemmas. During an enhancement-led visit (one-day workshop) they acquire new perspectives on the (often protracted) complex challenges, establish that other UL Members are also dealing with similar challenges, share ideas, get to know other UL Members' practices in this area, and identify their hidden, as-yet-unactivated potentials. An enhancement-led visit is concluded with concrete proposals for measures in each of the topics. These proposals are the result of joint research and reflection. A UL Member supplements and approves the measures, and includes the results in their regular planning and monitoring.

Enhancement-led visits encourage cooperation between different groups and a recognition of different perspectives. The excellent facilitation stimulates the use of participatory leadership and constructive communication elsewhere (e.g. in the UL Member management, in the study process).

Enhancement-led visits develop a new view of quality, since those participating gain experience of the development of quality that is relaxed, cooperative, creative and at the same time highly focused and effective (in contrast to the otherwise common view of quality as an additional burden or control).

Enhancement-led visits encourage cooperation within a UL Member, between UL Members and with UL, and strengthen mutual trust.

By taking part in enhancement-led visits, UL Members gain a more comprehensive overview of their operation and an incentive to identify priority topics in which they wish to make improvements.

#### Training for better preparation of measures for improvements

The way the measures are set out in UL Members' business reports and study programme self-evaluation reports vary greatly in quality. The quality fluctuates greatly between UL Members,



and even between areas within an individual report and between study programme reports.

Comments or objectives often take the place of measures and the measures are often not set out with sufficient precision. Training for the successful preparation of measures has been provided since 2015. The training provider gives participants concrete feedback on their UL Members' or study programmes' measures. They note that the quality of the written (proposals for) measures in the plans and reports is improving.

## Quality Culture Programme

UL first began to systematically carry out training for the development of all staff and training aimed at teaching development as part of the KUL project. Participants identified the topics, method of work (experiential learning with reflection) and providers as important for their development and work. Owing to the positive response from participants, the UL leadership decided, at the end of the project, to continue the training and provide it with its own funds. We subsequently carried out teacher training within [the INOVUP project](#), and continued general training within Quality Culture Programme using our own funds.

Effects of improvements: empowering staff with important skills, supporting cooperation, good communication and care for psychophysical health as important UL values.

Connecting and establishing trust between different groups of staff, different UL Members and with the UL, developing affiliation with the UL.

## 4 HEI as a learning organisation

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

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

The University of Ljubljana selected the Quality assurance of joint educational offerings as evaluation area IV.

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

##### **Strengths**

- The university has a clear strategic goal to increase internationalisation in educational provision, which is a prerequisite for developing joint educational offerings.
- There is strong individual commitment from the staff engaged in joint educational offers.
- Graduation rates and study duration are at a good level in the university's joint study programmes.

##### **Recommendations**

- The university should move from an individual approach to an institutionalised approach in joint study programmes. This would guarantee a solid common knowledge base, a platform for sharing experiences and good practices as well as common guidelines.
- Variation in student experiences, e.g., recognition, student selection, course offer, study plan, demands more proactive approaches at the university in planning and implementation of the joint educational offer.
- Senate should acknowledge and pay more attention to facilitating and developing joint education offers in the future, including financial sustainability.

## 4.1 The quality assurance of joint educational offer

### - Högskolans självvärdering

[The Internationalisation Strategy of the University of Ljubljana \(UL\) 2014-2017 \(2020\)](#) (in Slovene) prioritised internationalisation in joint study programmes.

The UL accredited the first joint programmes in 2007. Joint programmes represent the most integrated and complex form of cooperation in education between higher education institutions from different countries. UL have faced various challenges and sought solutions since the accreditation of the first joint programmes, to accommodate different national frameworks in partner institutions' countries. Despite numerous efforts at the European level and initiatives to simplify accreditation procedures and implementation, the situation is not improving as regards joint programmes. Terminology regarding joint programmes still differs among the countries of the European Higher Education Area and therefore joint programmes are regulated differently in national legislations. We encounter numerous administrative obstacles, which do not encourage cooperation and in certain cases even make it impossible.

In Slovenia, a change of legislation in 2016 enabled the implementation of a [European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes](#). Despite numerous efforts and initiatives on the part of UL, this approach has not been adopted in practice. Accreditation of joint programme still takes place in parallel or consecutively, depending on national or institutional rules of participating partner institutions, which is time-consuming and administratively exhausting.

We consider UL to be the most important player in Slovenia's higher education area as regards joint programmes, since it has the largest number of joint programmes, which differ from each other in view of their structure, management and implementation. The latter depends on the number and the country that partner institutions come from. UL has by far the most experience in this field – according to the SQAA public record of accredited joint programmes it is the only institution in the country with a broad range of experience. Despite this, the initiatives and proposals which UL addresses to the SQAA, based on its considerable experience in this field, as it actively strives to achieve a flexible and competitive arrangement of the national system, fall on deaf ears. With the recent changes to its criteria in January 2023 ([Criteria for International Cooperation](#)), the SQAA placed additional barriers on procedures relating to the accreditation and development of joint programmes and increased their regulation.

At the institutional level, the UL adopted several guidelines based on both experience and developments in this field. The currently applicable guidance for preparation and accreditation of joint programmes at the UL are part of the document Instructions for the management of degree study programmes of the UL – Annex 2: Rules of procedure for designing joint study programmes (available in the intranet).

## Joint educational offering at the UL

Currently, [one bachelor's](#), [nine joint master's programmes](#) and [one joint doctoral programme](#) are accredited at the UL. Previously UL had 17 accredited joint programmes, yet in individual cases cooperation has terminated for various reasons, which enabled UL to gain additional valuable experience.

In 2020 a brief analysis of the status of joint programmes at the UL was carried out, analysing the self-evaluation reports of joint programmes at the UL for two academic years (2017/2018 and 2018/2019). This examined the main strengths and weaknesses, the relevance of the content of the study programmes and their course units, and the quality of the teaching process.

The analysis revealed that the self-evaluation reports did not fully define or identify the characteristics that would be required for adequate assessments to be made, as the ones used were generic for all programmes, and no specific methodology was used in the self-evaluation for the joint programmes.

### **The following key findings on the status of joint programmes were obtained:**

- 1) Three of the joint programmes ([EMTM](#), [TRIBOS](#) and [EMA](#)) show strong coherence and alignment with the consortium, along with ongoing, systematic, pre-established periodic self-evaluations, follow-up on results, and other effective measures. In this respect, they differ significantly from the other joint programmes. These three programmes reflect a high level of awareness with regard to the importance of and concern for quality in the implementation of the curriculum.
- 2) In terms of the number of open enrollment slots, the number of students enrolled, and the number of applicants, three joint programmes stand out: [EMTM](#), [TRIBOS](#) and [CogSci](#).
- 3) The four joint programmes of the UL Faculty of Arts show exceptional diligence and a high level of awareness with regard to the importance of quality in the implementation of the curriculum (among individual departments and administrators/coordinators), although with less coordination at the level of the consortium. They can be seen as programmes that show a high degree of potential, but need further support in terms of evaluating study effectiveness and in areas where there is evidence of inadequate funding, staffing, and resources.

### **The key steps that should be taken are as follows:**

- The elimination of bureaucratic formalities related to the accreditation of joint programmes.
- A revised definition of joint programmes and procedures for the accreditation of joint programmes, adapted to the nature of the activities of a given consortium of universities for a given programme.
- The introduction of flexible forms of joint programmes from the point of view of the student, and not accreditation.

- Efforts to improve the promotion and sustainability of joint programmes.

### **Strengths**

Established sustainable cooperation in joint programmes (EMTM, TRIBOS, CogSci) with a high level of awareness of the importance and use of quality assurance mechanisms.

A broad perception of the scope of joint programmes and/or joint educational offering, and thus the development of more flexible forms of cooperation in education, regardless of any obstacles in national legislation.

The resilience of some joint programmes and other forms of cooperation despite the obstacles faced.

### **Enhancement areas**

Further efforts to align national legislation and thus simplify procedures and create a more flexible and competitive national system for joint programmes.

Promoting cooperation with partner institutions in more flexible ways.

## 4.1 The quality assurance of joint educational offer

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### The university's strategy emphasises joint study programmes

The University of Ljubljana (UL) emphasised internationalisation in its 2014-2017 (2020) internationalisation strategy, and joint study programmes are also emphasised in the university's strategy. The first joint study programmes were already started in 2007. The programmes represent deeply integrated, multinational educational cooperation. According to the audit visit, the implementation of joint programmes has encountered various challenges, such as adaption to disparate national frameworks between the partner countries and navigating administrative hurdles. The complications persist even amidst European-level efforts and initiatives meant to streamline accreditation processes and implementation. Varied terminology and regulations regarding joint programmes between countries in the European Higher Education Area present further obstacles, sometimes even hindering cooperation significantly.

As highlighted in the self-assessment report, the 2016 legislation change in Slovenia permitted the utilisation of a European approach to assuring the quality of joint programmes, but this approach has not been adopted in practice. The accreditation of joint programmes remains a burdensome process, occurring either in parallel or consecutively, contingent on the national or institutional rules of the partner entities, entailing significant time and administrative resources.

While the University of Ljubljana is esteemed for its diversified educational offerings, its catalogue of joint study programmes remains modest compared to its overall scale and reach. From 17 previously joint programmes, the UL has reported one bachelor's, nine joint master's programmes and one joint doctoral programme in its self-assessment. In 2020, the UL undertook a brief analysis of such offers by looking at the UL faculties and academies self-assessment reports. Due to the limited information in those reports on joint programmes, the analysis did not lead to detailed findings. However, the UL emphasises the need for development and expansion of such programmes, which can foster richer, integrated learning experiences and potentiate collaborative research opportunities across international borders. This strategic orientation has been implemented towards the UL's commitment to the European University Alliance Initiative in general and the UL's participation in EUTOPIA, one of the EU funded Alliances.

The university faces the imperative to balance its evident tendency towards joint and double degrees with a fortified emphasis on expanding joint educational provisions, leveraging its existing international partnerships, and fostering the EUTOPIA alliances. The self-assessment report provides somewhat generic observations mainly addressing the given national accreditation practices and some institutional aspects including financial issues, which could explain the decrease of joint programmes at the UL.

The engagement within educational consortiums, such as EUTOPIA, is commendable, reflecting the UL's commitment to developing connected learning frameworks and embracing collaborative research. Exploiting such initiatives to foster joint study programmes could enrich the academic portfolio of the UL and its consortium members, enabling students and staff to engage in a multifaceted, international educational and research environment.

## The individual commitment of staff is strong

The UL has considerable strengths that highlight its successful implementation strategies, collaborative ventures, committed personnel and agile quality enhancement within the context of joint educational provisions. The joint programmes of the UL have good completion rates and optimal study time indicators, reflecting a successful implementation of its programmes and efficacious student progression and achievement. This is indicative of robust curricular design, delivery and supportive student services and guidance mechanisms that facilitate smooth academic journeys. This strong performance in implementation showcases the university's capability to offer stable and reliable educational pathways, which is particularly pivotal in the context of joint educational provisions, ensuring consistency and reliability across collaborative platforms.

The enthusiastic commitment of the individuals involved in the development, coordination, and teaching of joint educational provisions at the UL stands out as a strength. This entails dedicated efforts in curricular development, thorough planning, and effective delivery, ensuring that the joint programmes are well-structured and well-executed. This strength is mirrored in the quality of the educational experiences provided to students and the outcomes achieved, which are crucial in maintaining and enhancing the UL's reputation and performance in joint study programmes.

The UL's quality improvement approaches will strengthen its ability to cope with the complexity and dynamism of today's higher education environment. Flexibility allows the UL to adapt approaches to the specific needs and circumstances of different programmes and collaborations. Agility is indispensable in the realm of joint educational provision, where the ability to respond rapidly and effectively to arising challenges and opportunities while maintaining quality can significantly impact the success and sustainability of the programmes.

These identified strengths provide the University of Ljubljana with a solid foundation upon which it can continue to build and expand its joint educational provisions as an institution. Implementation achievements, staff cooperation and commitment provide the basis for international educational cooperation. By leveraging these strengths, the university will strengthen its current degree offerings and pave the way for the enhancement and improvement of future joint educational initiatives, contributing to global academic cooperation and discourses.

## Quality assurance for joint programmes should be simplified

The UL's quality assurance mechanisms need to facilitate an environment where joint educational provisions can be initiated, developed, and accredited in a complex structure and decision-making processes based on the fragmented nature of the UL structure with its faculties and academies. Existing strategies, institutional approaches, the language of instruction regulations, the "Rules of procedure for designing joint study programmes", and mainly the existing external accreditation processes allow but do not fully support nor stimulate the provision of joint educational provision to the full potential of the UL.

The UL with its quality approach, collaborative engagements, and diverse implementation practices is positioned to enhance its joint educational provisions. However, streamlining the accreditation processes, ensuring support mechanisms, and fostering a culture that embraces and facilitates joint educational initiatives is pivotal. While the diversity of implementation practices across the UL stimulates innovation, establishing a harmonised framework for the development and management of joint educational provisions is essential. Such an initial framework through the procedures described in the UL's "Rules of procedure for designing joint study programmes" supports consistency in quality, as well as the student experience, and outcome alignment between various joint programmes. However, the UL has a fragmented and overall less effective quality system including a large diversity of structures and procedures at the faculty level (see also the discussion in Chapter 3). This diversity is also mirrored in the quality approaches of existing joint educational offers and makes a harmonised and common approach difficult at the UL.

Integrating the European Approach in programme accreditation would facilitate more fluid and effective international cooperation in joint programme development, ensuring that quality assurance and accreditation processes are harmonised and mutually recognised between participating institutions. A structured and comprehensive institutional description, clearly defining the various types and natures of joint educational offerings, is important to ensure clarity, coherence, and strategic alignment in the development and implementation of such programmes.

## A more institutionalised and structured approach needed for joint educational offer at the university

The university must ensure that joint programmes are structured and supported by the relevant departments at both university and faculty levels. The university should implement regular forums to facilitate the exchange of information between programme leaders and academic and administrative staff and ensure that good practice, challenges and innovations in the development and implementation of joint programmes are shared, discussed, and exploited across the board. This would streamline processes and optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of such programmes, ensuring consistency, quality, and strategic alignment across programmes



and across the UL's faculties and academies. According to the audit visit, some programmes have minimum standards, so the partner universities can unify issues and contents of the joint programmes.

Based on the complexity and importance for the UL, joint programmes should be coordinated at the UL-level. This coordination should cover the development, implementation, and evaluation of all joint study programmes. This would lead to the standardisation of processes and ensure a common and high-quality standard as well as fast and agile decision-making processes. Common procedures would also ensure that the diversified practices contribute to the overarching institutional and collaborative objectives. The UL senate should also acknowledge and support these initiatives. A shift from an individual to a more institutionalised approach should be implemented.

A transparent student selection process and standardised recognition of credits and micro-credentials should be introduced. Such an approach will ensure consistency, fairness, and strategic alignment in collaborative educational initiatives and should be rolled out and followed across the UL. Based on the audit visit, it was found that students sometimes have problems getting their studies at foreign universities accredited in their faculty. Developing joint approaches for validating and recognising prior learning in joint programmes, in collaboration with partner universities, would facilitate smoother student transitions and progression within such offerings.

Maintaining and enhancing the quality of joint programmes requires that quality enhancement systems are integrated and documented across partner universities and that such information is transparently shared with relevant stakeholders. Universities and national agencies should accept and respect the quality assurance procedures of other national higher education systems.

The evaluation mechanisms for study abroad phases of joint programmes, such as adapting Erasmus mobility quality assurance instruments, should be further refined to ensure that the data collected is optimally utilised for the continuous quality enhancement of the joint study programmes. Ensuring timely implementation of standards, such as tutoring systems, and precisely defining arrangements (e.g. credit transfer processes) well in advance supports student progression and enhances the overall student experience in joint programmes.

## Sustainable funding is essential for the continuity of joint programmes

Structural and financial support mechanisms need to be scrutinised and enhanced to support joint educational provisions. The UL's engagement with funding programmes, such as Erasmus and CEEPUS, provides a solid foundation that could be built upon and expanded. Leveraging such schemes to facilitate joint programmes could enhance the practical feasibility and attractiveness of such provisions for students and staff, ensuring their viability and sustainability. Crafting strategies to ensure sustainable funding, particularly following the conclusion of initial external funding phases, is pivotal to the continuity and stability of joint programmes, ensuring that such

initiatives are financially viable in the long term. Prioritising comprehensive information provision regarding semester(s) abroad, course selections and logistical considerations is critical to ensure that students are well-informed and adequately prepared to navigate their joint educational journeys.

In summary, nurturing a culture that empowers and motivates staff and students to engage in and contribute to joint study programmes can substantiate the university's commitment to internationalisation and collaborative education. This may involve recognising and addressing potential challenges and barriers experienced by staff and students in navigating joint educational frameworks, thereby facilitating a supportive environment for joint educational offerings. However, this culture needs clear and transparent structures and procedures. Such common procedures would ensure that the diversified practices would contribute to the overarching institutional and collaborative objectives.

The UL must substantively refine its joint educational provisions, ensuring that such initiatives are not only robustly structured and implemented but also sustainably managed and continuously enhanced. In doing so, the UL will further develop its position in collaborative international education, fostering enriched academic experiences for its students and solidifying its contributions to global academic discourses and practices.

The UL should continuously monitor and weave its commendable strengths and identified opportunities to advance its joint educational provisions. This will enhance its contributions to, and impact within, the global academic community. In the continually evolving landscapes of higher education, the UL navigates through both its success and challenges in joint educational offerings.

## 5 Benchlearning

### - Högskolans självvärdering

## Benchlearning exercise in EUTOPIA – Quality assurance and joint programmes

During the Fourth EUTOPIA WEEK, an online workshop called “The Future of the EUTOPIA Quality Assurance System” was held on November 25, 2021. All EUTOPIA universities participated, apart from Dresden University of Technology.

The following topics were covered:

1. The quality assurance (QA) systems of EUTOPIA universities (national framework and university QA),
2. The QA of joint programmes and other transnational educational programmes at EUTOPIA universities,
3. Future QA (in general), and the QA of EUTOPIA learning communities and other educational programmes.

The aim of the workshop was to get an overview of general QA at EUTOPIA higher education institutions (HEIs), the QA of education, and the QA processes used in joint programmes or examples of other transnational educational programmes.

The exercise demonstrated and confirmed previous analyses of the systems of EUTOPIA QA, and thus that all partner universities have successfully undergone external QA processes based on the ESG principles. Although this should not be confused with the assumption of largely consistent internal QA systems, it is nevertheless reasonable to assume that the core features of internal QA in teaching and learning are implemented in similar ways. All cooperating HEIs apply regular monitoring systems, which differ in technical aspects of organisation and duration. A more relevant difference relates to the subject matter, and the great majority of HEIs focus on study programmes, while one HEI focuses on the relevant institutional measures to monitor the quality of the learning process.

### Connected Learning Communities

One of EUTOPIA’s innovations is the [Connected Learning Communities](#) (CLCs) based on an innovative educational model. EUTOPIA CLCs offer a range of learning formats through curricular and co-curricular activities: peer feedback sessions, negotiation simulations, online experiments and debates, student-led research projects, problem-based learning, module design, and the organisation of cross-campus research seminars. The activities are performed synchronously and

asynchronously. So far EUTOPIA has developed 30 CLCs. In total, approximately 44 employees from 17 UL Members actively participate in 23 CLCs. Each CLC goes through a three-year development cycle. The majority of these CLCs are still operational, and at the UL we are fostering their future development and taking steps to make them sustainable. We do this by employing a local facilitator who supports already existing CLCs as well as onboarding new ones. To date, approximately 300 students from the UL have been involved in the activities offered by the CLCs over the past three years.

The aim is to establish sustainable CLCs. We will support the incorporation of CLCs in various curricula. Additionally, we will support the inclusion of micro-credentials for students who are involved in CLCs. One current limitation is the lack of acknowledgement and additional support for the participation of academic staff in CLCs. At present, some UL Members are better supported with access to various grants that support EUTOPIA activities, such as visits to partner institutions by academic staff and students. The function of the local facilitator is to improve these opportunities across all member faculties with the support of project offices.

In the light of their previous collaboration as partners in CLCs in Artificial Intelligence, the UL and Pompeu Fabra University agreed to establish a new joint programme in Artificial Intelligence under the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters ([EMAJ](#)).

The UL, together with VUB and UoW, representing EUTOPIA, recently joined the SMARTT project (Screening, Mapping, Analysing, Recommending, Transferring and Transforming HE international programmes) as an associate partner, whose main objectives are to screen, test and make recommendations on the criteria for awarding a European Degree Label to improve quality and increase transferability.

## Key conclusions of the workshop

EUTOPIA pursues its strategic goals and is increasingly critical to QA's internal organisational success, particularly as it relates to the future development and sustainability of CLCs. The goal of providing a new methodology that combines the qualities of the learning and research organisation and knowledge management is critical to further developments in this context.

The governance of EUTOPIA provides us with the opportunity to establish predominantly application-oriented approaches as a 'new' concept of accountability in EUTOPIA's own internal QA system. EUTOPIA builds on a process of the much deeper integration of partner universities. As integration continues incrementally, this starting point in terms of QA is important because two perspectives converge:

- the perspective of a development project with specific goals and milestones that require a project management approach and have the character of QA with regard to the results; and
- the perspective of an institution in transition, starting with the processes of affiliated communities as the core of a new institutional approach.

### **Good practices of UL**

- Finding financial resources to support CLCs.
- Cooperation with international offices at the majority of UL Members.

### **Good practices of the partners**

- Better promotion of the alliance among staff and students.
- Including activities as part of the curriculum.
- Offering micro-credentials for participation.

### **Good practices of the benchlearning partners to be applied at UL**

- Establishment of new joint master's programme on Artificial Intelligence (as part of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters programme).
- Offering resources (a part-time teaching assistant) and additional administrative support to the Connected Learning Communities (CLCs) UL leads.
- Establishing the transfer of knowledge from the CLCs that have already finished the three-year development cycle to new CLCs in development.

## **Audit team's comments**

The UL chose quality assurance and joint programmes as the focus of benchlearning and the EUTOPIA network as a partner. Benchlearning was organised as a workshop in November 2023, in which all EUTOPIA partner universities participated. The UL's active membership in EUTOPIA, the European University Alliance, underpins its commitment to fostering collaborative academic ventures. The engagement within educational consortiums, such as EUTOPIA, is commendable, reflecting the UL's commitment to developing connected learning frameworks and embracing collaborative research. The alliance, which is instrumental in developing joint educational offers, provides the UL with a platform to both contribute to and benefit from a synergised European educational landscape. Being part of an alliance places the UL in a strategically advantageous position to access resources, networks, and opportunities that can substantively enhance its joint educational offerings and collaborative research ventures.

The UL confirmed that partner universities in the EUTOPIA network have successfully undergone external quality assurance (QA) processes based on ESG principles, while noting that internal QA systems may vary. The universities employ regular monitoring systems, with variations in organisation and duration, primarily focusing on study programmes. During the review it became evident that the monitoring and evaluation of the connected learning communities could benefit from a more systematic and cross-institutional approach.

The goal of the UL is to create connected learning communities (CLCs) and integrate them into different curricula. They also plan to introduce micro-credentials for students engaged in community learning centres. The review members raised the challenge that there is unequal support for academic staff in CLCs, with some UL faculties and academies having better access to

grants for EUTOPIA activities. To enhance the opportunities for all members, the local facilitator's role could be strengthened with project office support.

According to the audit visit, some students reported that the study credits awarded in EUTOPIA activities are not recognised by all faculties. To increase the attractiveness and to ensure the sustainability of the programme, plans to ensure the transferability of credits gained through the EUTOPIA network are recommended. Students participating in EUTOPIA learning communities must be selected based on equal opportunities and transparent procedures, including transparent student selection criteria.

# Appendix 1. Evaluation criteria for the level good

## - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

### 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.