1.1 The planning of education

- HEI's self-assessment

Sustainable business, energy, and society – UVA strategy as the cornerstone for the planning of education

Degree programmes are built around UVA's profile – sustainable business, energy, and society – and its corresponding three strategic focus areas: Business Management, Energy Transition & Technology, and Governance & Society. The planning of education and the degree portfolio includes systematic input from different stakeholders such as the City of Vaasa, the region, alumni, and industry representatives (e.g., via UVA and Programme Advisory Boards), research groups and students. The UVA strategy 2030 defines three development programmes for education planning: programmes through which the targets in education planning will be achieved:

- Revised programme portfolio for the best learner experience
- Digitalisation of education
- International education with impact.

The planning of education (BSc and MSc) is headed by the Vice Rector of Education supported by the deans, the School Management Groups, and the joint Programme Development Committee. All UVA curricula are submitted to the Education Council for approval after consideration in the schools. The planning and development of doctoral education takes place in the Graduate School, Management Group of the Graduate School and the Research Council headed by the Vice Rector for Research. Elected student representatives from student associations are represented at all levels of decision-making at the university. (Figure 3).

Curricula ensuring a meaningful learner experience

Curriculum planning is based on the [Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004)](#) and the UVA degree regulations. Both define the objectives for the degrees at levels 6-8 in the [National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules](#). The planning is guided by UVA strategy and more detailed UVA guidelines in each curriculum round (Messi: Curriculum). QA is embedded into the Programme Management Principles for teaching excellence and the best learner experience.

Strategic Management & Quality Assurance bodies
Education

Legend:
- Education development and quality assurance
- Target setting and performance management of the school

Figure 3. Strategic Management & Quality Assurance in Education

The curricula are planned and agreed according to UVA annual curriculum approval cycle (Figure 4) for two to three years. Curriculum mapping is used in the curriculum development work to define and monitor the programme's intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and map the individual courses to ensure that the course curricula, teaching and assessment methods, and virtual and physical learning environments support the students' learning experience and achievement of the defined ILOs. UVA emphasizes the relevance of work life and employment by incorporating real-world applications and industry insights into the curriculum via School- or programme-level advisors. Study and Education Services support curriculum development process, manage the Peppi study system, and collect relevant feedback (e.g. graduate surveys, career surveys, and in business studies also the Assurance of Learning student learning data). UVA Eduwasa team supports teachers in pedagogical and digital planning.
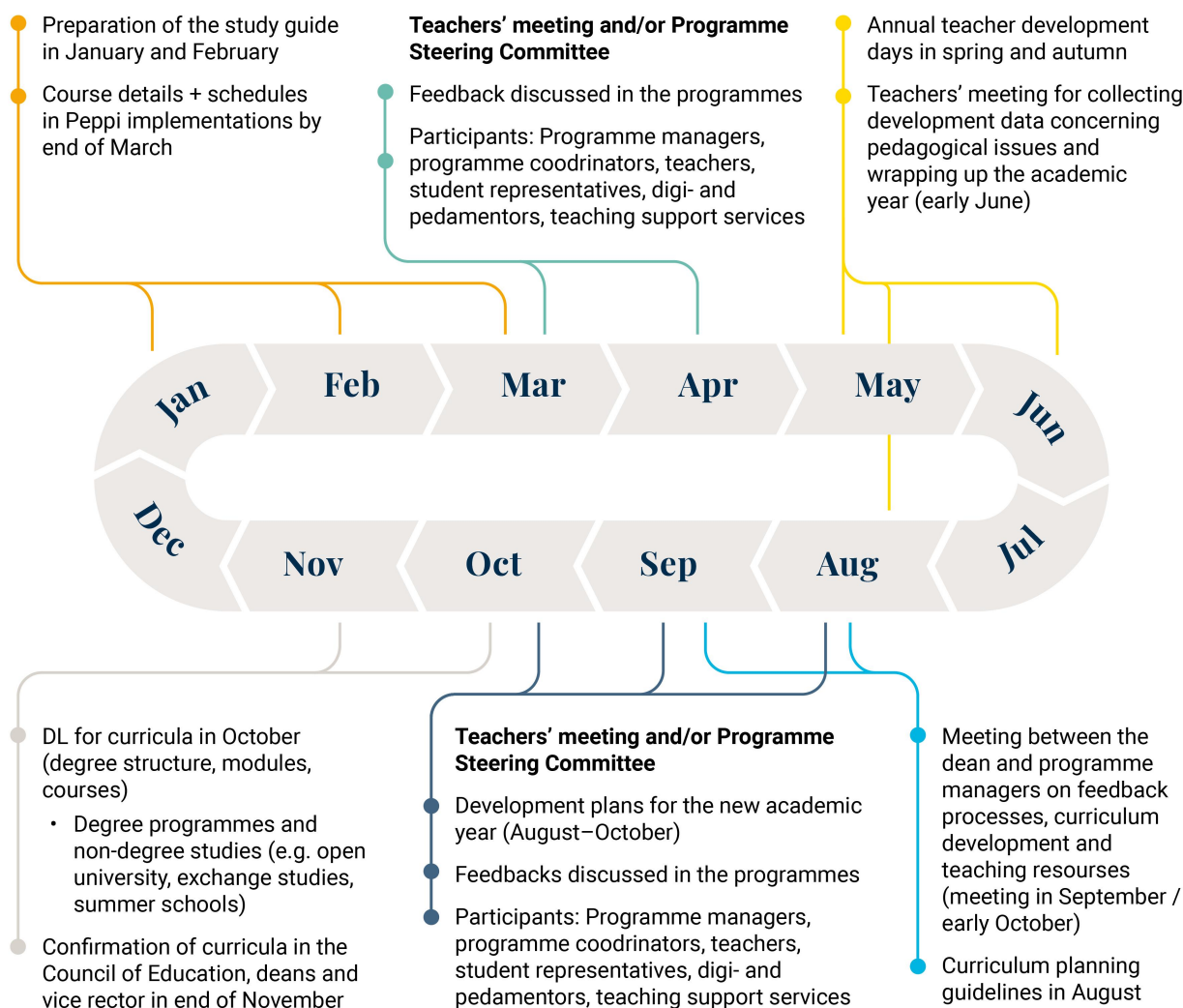
Annual curriculum management

Preparation of the study guide in January and February

Course details + schedules in Peppi implementations by end of March

Teachers' meeting and/or Programme Steering Committee

Feedback discussed in the programmes

Participants: Programme managers, programme coodrinators, teachers, student representatives, digi- and pedamentors, teaching support services

Annual teacher development days in spring and autumn

Teachers' meeting for collecting development data concerning pedagogical issues and wrapping up the academic year (early June)

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun
Dec Nov Oct Sep Aug Jul

DL for curricula in October (degree structure, modules, courses)
  • Degree programmes and non-degree studies (e.g. open university, exchange studies, summer schools)

Confirmation of curricula in the Council of Education, deans and vice rector in end of November

Teachers' meeting and/or Programme Steering Committee

Development plans for the new academic year (August–October)

Feedbacks discussed in the programmes

Participants: Programme managers, programme coodrinators, teachers, student representatives, digi- and pedamentors, teaching support services

Meeting between the dean and programme managers on feedback processes, curriculum development and teaching resourses (meeting in September / early October)

Curriculum planning guidelines in August

Figure 4. Annual cycle for curriculum development and approval

Research – the foundation of UVA's high-quality education

Course curricula are planned based on the most recent research findings. The majority of teaching faculty in degree programmes hold a PhD and are actively conducting research. UVA's research platforms facilitate interdisciplinary research and knowledge dissemination. Research is integrated into teaching by applying examples and using research articles as course material. Our education prepares students for academic careers and encourages them to participate in research projects during their studies.

International education with impact

International accreditation and evaluation processes (AACSB, ASIIN, EFMD, EQUIS) are used to continuously improve education quality, with a particular emphasis on internationalisation, innovation and impact. Both MSc and BSc double degrees have been developed with high-quality partners to increase international learning opportunities for students. Collaboration in international educational networks, like the European university alliance EUNICE, the Global Business School Network (GBSN) and HERMES network, create excellent opportunities for international cooperation in course planning and delivery.

Planning of continuous learning integrated into curriculum work

Education planning includes paths for continuous education. Trends in working life and society are closely followed to meet the changing needs of different target groups. Open University and Continuous Education teams coordinate the provision of UVA's continuous education. Vaasa Executive Education Ltd. offers MBA modules and tailored executive education. Continuous education opportunities are structured around four main categories:

- Open University education has the same goals, curricula and requirements as degree studies. Studies are mostly arranged online to offer more flexibility. There is an open university route to degree programmes for non-degree learners who have accumulated sufficient studies. Courses are also offered in English to help skilled immigrants in accessing university education.

- Executive Education offers the Executive MBA programme, customized programmes, and online courses (time- and location-independent online training for experts, managers, and executives).

- Alumni Right to Study. After completing the master's degree, a UVA student can apply for an alumni study right for open university studies or normal degree courses to supplement the degree free of charge for one academic year.

- LUMA Centre of Ostrobothnia promotes the teaching and learning of science, mathematics and technology for children and young people. The centre is part of the national LUMA Centre Finland.

Strengths	Enhancement areas

Clear and distinctive mission, strategy, and development direction (educational portfolio, student experience, smart use of digitalisation, internationalization)

Strong cooperation with industry and public organisations, plus open, constructive dialogue with student representatives and student union/associations

Clearly defined programme management structure and principles that steer continuous improvements and multi-step decision-making that ensures sufficient scrutiny and inclusive stakeholder involvement

More systematic feedback to students at course and programme level regarding learning achievements, curriculum improvements, and learner experience

Greater inclusion of international students in decision-making bodies and student association activities

Enhanced visibility and use of Programme Management Principles

1.1 The planning of education

- Assessment of the audit team

The organisation of educational planning is transparent

Educational planning is well and transparently organised at the University of Vaasa (UVA). In particular, the close link between UVA's strategy and the involvement of external stakeholders is noteworthy. According to the self-assessment report and audit visit, education planning incorporates UVA's strategic priorities with a focus on business studies, technology, administrative sciences and communication studies. As mentioned in the self-assessment report, UVA has defined three targets for educational planning: revised programme portfolio for the best learning experience, digitalisation of education and international education with impact. According to the UVA's vision, the education offers a transformative learner experience for future employment built on teaching excellence, high-quality learning environments, equality and inclusion.

Educational planning follows a participatory approach and uses rich feedback information. Programme managers, academic faculty, students, alumni, local authorities, industry and the City of Vaasa are closely involved in defining competences of the UVA educational provision. During the audit visit, some external stakeholders wished to have even more influence on the content of the curricula. The active involvement of students and of staff members in educational planning was explicitly mentioned and acknowledged in the student and staff workshops. As UVA's strategy includes an increase in the number of international students, the audit team recommends the university defines processes for the systematic involvement of international students in educational planning and decision-making activities.

UVA follows a student-centred and research-based approach. Education combines research activities with student learning and considerable practice-based activities organised with students, staff and external stakeholders. Based on the audit visit, all students are offered

research methods courses. Some students work on research projects and write their theses for the projects and are involved in and co-organise international research seminars and workshops. In general, educational planning is conducted in a systematic and transparent process that corresponds to the Finnish National Qualifications Framework.

UVA's curricula are planned and approved following the processes described in the Annual Curriculum Management cycle. The Education Council, chaired by the Vice-rector for Education, confirms the curricula. As identified in the self-assessment report, intended learning outcomes (ILO) are an integral part of the educational planning process through curriculum mapping and curated principles of programme management.

UVA should align intended learning outcomes and assessment of learning

According to UVA, the student's workload is standardised and measured against the ECTS. Based on curriculum and syllabus samples and audit interviews, there are differences between different UVA courses that earn the same number of credits regarding the estimated workload, the appropriate number and formulation of intended learning outcomes and the assessment methods. Thus, it is not sufficiently clear to students how the intended learning outcomes can be obtained and the complexity level of the intended learning outcomes across different courses varies from over-simplified to over-demanding. According to the student workshop, there is variation between the workloads of students in the different courses, even if the number of credits is the same. Differences are not explained by the stage at which the courses are offered. The audit team recommends that the UVA study programme documents, like curricula and syllabus, are continuously monitored and updated to refine intended learning outcomes and align them with assessment methods. The audit team also recommends that UVA monitor workload regularly and systematically. UVA should also pay more attention to the competence-based approach of courses and curricula.

Based on curriculum and syllabus samples, the audit team identified some cases of inadequate connections between the intended learning outcomes and the learning assessment methods for these. Sometimes the choice of learning assessments poorly corresponds to the complexity of the courses' intended learning outcomes. The audit team recommends that UVA update more regularly the content and literature of curricula and courses, methods for assessing the intended learning outcomes and other aspects of teaching and learning. In this way, the university can ensure that there is a sound basis for delivering modern and relevant study programmes, materials and teaching and assessment approaches. The audit team encourages UVA to continue the practice of programme managers, academic faculty and students working together on study programmes' curricula and syllabus. Curriculum planning should be better supported by the university. The teachers could benefit from further pedagogical training in curriculum development.

The university has common Principles of Programme Management, which based on the audit visit are also used. The audit team suggests that these principles and other guidelines for standardising good practice could be further developed to improve programme management, including programme delivery by using process descriptions. Detailed process descriptions would

contribute to harmonising educational planning practices across the university.

Internationalisation and continuous learning support UVA's strategy

UVA's curriculum management process includes also joint programmes with international partners. Aligned with its strategic objective of internationalisation, UVA cooperates with a wide range of external stakeholders on curriculum development, including joint and dual degree programmes. Multicultural development and internationalisation at home activities are aligned with the student and staff diversification goal. Members of the UVA community can apply for international exchange programmes and attend international conferences.

UVA has also considered the need for continuous learning. The university has adopted a strategic approach as regards diversifying its study offer for continuous learners. According to the self-assessment report, the continuous learning provision includes the Open University, the Executive MBA programmes, the alumni right to study and the Ostrobothnia LUMA Centre. They enable flexible learning pathways and a tailored academic provision. Particularly noteworthy are the offers made available for UVA alumni, who benefit from special discounts. The data provided on the Open University demonstrates an increase in the number of enrolled continuous education students, but a decrease in their completed credits. The dropout and non-completion rates should be further monitored and worked on. The audit team considers that UVA's continuing learning provision is promising as it is also planning micro-credentials for a wider audience.