

# AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

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## 1.2 The implementation of education

### - Högskolans självvärdering

#### Transparency and equality in student selection

The University systematically applies Government statutes and stipulations related to student selection, education, study progress, and graduation. University-level decisions that ensure students' legal protection and equal treatment can be found on the University's website [Guidelines and regulations](#).

UVA has a formal process for determining admissions criteria, which involves preparing and publishing admissions guidelines, managing the application process, evaluating eligibility and making decisions based on admission criteria. Admission criteria are set by the [Education Council](#). The criteria are published on the [UVA Admissions website](#) and in [Studyinfo](#). University services coordinate the application process from submission to selection decisions and guide the applicants, supporting to ensure fairness and transparency. To enhance equal opportunities, applicants are offered individual arrangements in entrance exams.

UVA has policies and procedures in place for [recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#), and accrediting studies or competencies acquired outside of UVA degree programs. The RPL decisions are made based on the learning objectives of the study unit.

#### Learner-centered course delivery

Teaching and assessment methods must be aligned with the ILOs defined for the course and the programme, as well as the course content and workload. All courses apply a syllabus, which is

discussed at the beginning of the course, ensuring that the students are well acquainted with the ILOs, methods, and content of the course, as well as their and the teacher's roles and responsibilities.

A variety of teaching methods are utilized, such as traditional lectures, applicatory projects, and exercises, flipped classroom techniques, Harvard-style case teaching, problem-based learning, student projects for real-life case companies, and business simulations. Collaborative learning is emphasized in group discussions, poster presentations, activating dialogues, simulations, and various other forms of presentations. The selected teaching methods provide a comprehensive and varied approach to instruction, ensuring that students are actively involved in their learning process and can achieve target-oriented learning outcomes.

Assessment and grading policies are in place to ensure consistency. Clear grading policies and rubrics are set, and double marking is used for master's theses. The assessment regime is monitored, and standardized syllabi and rubrics are used to maintain consistency in standards.

## Feedback to students on their learning

Feedback is an integral part of supporting learners' achievement of targeted learning outcomes. It offers students ways to understand their strengths and evaluate their progress and develop learning strategies. The programmes utilize various methods to provide feedback: Continuous feedback, including immediate feedback on generic skills. Feedback is provided on assignments, such as learning diaries, essays, projects, and case assignments.

## Smooth progress in studies and integration into working life

Degree-, programme- and course-level ILOs are all designed to equip the students with skills and competences that are relevant to working life and foster students' ability to continuous self-development in a rapidly changing environment. Studies include real-life learning opportunities such as industry projects and cases, excursions, mentoring programmes, workshops, and labs in close cooperation with the surrounding industry. Many master's students conduct their theses as company commissions. All UVA degree programmes grant credits for internships.

[Career Services](#) support students in their career planning via career counseling, mentoring, financial support for internships, working life courses, workshops and information sessions, recruitment events, and job announcements. UVA promotes the employment and integration of international students in the region through special initiatives (e.g. Talent Hub, Spouse Programme).

## Services, guidance, and well-being to support study progress and learning

UVA offers comprehensive guidance and support services, including study counselors, study psychologist, and other guidance and well-being services. (Figure 5). UVA offers low-threshold services, e.g., drop-in counseling on campus and remotely to support proactive services and the

adequacy of resources. UVA is enhancing its services through initiatives like the "Annie Advisor" chatbot to identify individual student needs. Throughout the year, academic staff remain accessible and approachable. Counselors and teachers monitor the progress of students' studies through Personal Study Plans and guidance sessions, as well as the new Fokus tool that facilitates student tracking and early intervention actions. In terms of accessibility policy, students are offered individual arrangements to accommodate their specific needs.

UVA also places importance on the successful *integration of new students* into the university community. These include orientation and induction programs, student tutor programmes in cooperation with the [Student Union](#). UVA supports students' *sense of community and well-being* by supporting the students' own actions to strengthen the community. The "Buddy" project starts in autumn 2024 to support the integration of our international students. UVA works in close cooperation with [Student Health Services](#), the City of Vaasa and other network services to promote well-being. Guidance and support services, as well as other support actions, are also accessible to the students studying outside the main Vaasa campus.

UVA ensures the availability of [physical and digital resources](#), such as well-equipped classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and online learning platforms like Moodle, to support learning and research activities.

# Guidance and Well-being Services



**Figure 5.** Guidance and well-being services

## Strengths

## Enhancement areas

Structured annual cycle for the management and implementation of student intake decisions, student selection criteria, and degree targets	Coordination and leveraging of working life partnerships and alumni networks
Diversity of forums for students to meet the university and school leadership and the involvement in bodies that shape the development of education	More effective utilization of digital tools in educational processes (e.g., teaching scheduling, student admissions)
Introduction of new technology-enabled channels and tools to support students	Greater consideration of accessibility and equality (e.g., international diversity age diversity, neurodiversity)

## 1.2 The implementation of education

### - Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

#### Learning experiences are well co-created and supported

According to the self-assessment report, admission criteria are set by the Education Council. The criteria are published on the UVA Admissions website and on national Studyinfo webpages. The student life cycle at UVA begins with transparent procedures for student admission and the recognition of prior learning. UVA has policies and procedures in place for recognition of prior learning (RPL), and accrediting studies or competencies acquired outside of UVA degree programs. The decisions of recognition of prior learning are made based on the courses' intended learning outcomes. During the courses, study progress and degree completion are consistently monitored through the system of study guidance, as established in the Programme Management Principles. Similarly, UVA supports students well in their integration into professional life through versatile career support services during and after studies. According to the audit visit, students are aware of these tools and appreciate them. Students are well employed during the summer and as interns in local companies.

According to the audit visit, students are members of working committees and advisory boards, including those for the development of the UVA strategy. Based on the student accounts, a variety of pedagogical methods are used that allow for student-centred and practice-oriented learning. Also, according to the audit visit, teachers often invite external lecturers from companies, municipalities, and other employers. Students prepare their thesis projects and do their internships in local companies. This has been much appreciated by students.

Based on the student workshop, students receive timely and sufficient feedback on their learning and feel supported in the learning process. In some courses, students also receive feedback from

peers and older students. However, based on the workshop, academic faculty could improve their responsiveness as regards coursework and assignments, particularly for courses where the number of students is steadily increasing.

According to the workshop, students particularly appreciated the feedback they received, the flexibility of the studies, the language courses, the group works, the low threshold for contacting professors by email, the enthusiastic teachers, the diversity of teaching methods and learning materials and the opportunity to study with international students. On the other hand, students would like to have more interaction with others, more face-to-face courses, and a balance between the number of courses in Finnish and English. The audit team recommends that UVA reflect on the ability of the academic faculty to handle an increasing number of student population. The university should allocate additional resources to support quality course delivery and encourage teachers to use innovative pedagogical methods more actively for teaching and learning. According to the staff workshop, many teachers are willing and able to implement more innovative methods.

UVA offers adequate counselling and services to support study and learning progress. The audit visit indicated that the university provides sufficient support to students in matters related to student orientation, well-being, physical and digital resources for learning and research, alongside language studies and integration courses for non-Finnish students. The audit team recommends that UVA continues to build learning trajectories, establish peer support groups, and support career development. These tools should also cater more to the interests of international students. According to the audit visit and workshops, more study counsellors are needed. First-year students in particular need a lot of guidance.

The audit team was delighted to hear from international doctoral students and their Finnish peers how happy they were with the inclusive atmosphere of the UVA community. According to the audit visit, UVA has been successful in integrating international students into its community. UVA has the potential to be one of Finland leading universities in internationalisation. The regional culture and bilingual community of the Vaasa region can be a great advantage as regards supporting the UVA community culture in the future.

However, international students are not able to participate sufficiently in Student Union activities. The audit team encourages the Students' Union to address this challenge together with UVA and recommend that career services for international students be further enhanced by offering more internship vouchers and interview coaching, facilitating connections with local students, networks and employers, and extending language training towards socially relevant situations. According to the audit visit, the Vaasa region has the lowest unemployment rate in Finland, so Finnish and international students have good opportunities to stay and seek employment in the region.

The university's work on supporting student well-being is organised in a systemic and systematic manner. UVA provides a wide range of support services in student well-being, e.g., a student psychologist, well-being weeks and events, a campus pastor, sports and healthcare facilities. It conducts well-being surveys for students. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a

particularly high number of them.

The central goal for the UVA's Equality Plan is to reinforce an equality-positive atmosphere and to effectively communicate equality matters to the students and staff. According to the audit visit, students know who the contact persons in case of harassment, discrimination or bullying. UVA also has the Accessibility plan for 2024-2026.