

# AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Tekijät **Tatjana Volkova, Hans Gruber, Siamäk Naghian, Kateryna Suprun, Mira Huusko & Sirpa Moitus. Self-assessment of the University of Vaasa (eds.) Marja-Liisa Hassi & Tanja Risikko.**

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## 1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

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#### Intended learning outcomes and evaluation

Programme ILOs are designed based on UVA's Programme Management Principles to ensure that graduates have the requisite knowledge, skills, and competences to succeed in the graduate labour market, and to enable continuous self-development in a changing work environment. The Programme Management Principles require that the curriculum and delivery of a programme should include transversal aspects of ethics, responsibility, sustainability, international outlook, and sense of community. The ILOs are structured so that the overall degree and programme learning goals are reflected in the course-specific ILOs. UVA has introduced an assurance of learning (AoL) system to measure individual student achievement of learning goals (see below for further details).

UVA utilizes various QA processes to analyze the achievement of learning outcomes. The processes include internal and external assessments. On an annual basis, feedback from students and teacher input are used to monitor the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment within Programme Committees and teachers' meetings. In terms of internal, programme-level assessment, UVA has conducted periodic (3-5-year) programme 'programme inspections' in its' international master business programmes. In terms of external assessment, most programmes at UVA are operating to an [international accreditation](#) standard (e.g., AACSB, ASIIN, EFMD, EDAMBA), which involves periodic evaluations from independent international experts and involves UVA management, teaching faculty, students, study administration, and external stakeholders (e.g., alumni, UVA corporate partners).

## Student feedback supporting continuous improvements in education

Student feedback is collected through various means to improve learner-centered education. The course feedback system in the Peppi study information system allows students to evaluate course content, teaching methods, workload, and course material. Course feedback can also be collected through e.g., Moodle's gradebook, or orally from students during a course. Feedback is also collected from students in connection with graduation and later in alumni surveys. These surveys provide a valuable tool for regular degree- and programme-level evaluation and are utilized in curriculum design. UVA has student feedback guidelines in place.

To ensure transparency, the programme makes assessment criteria and rubrics publicly available through course syllabi and/or Moodle. Course objectives, integration of key themes, and feedback are discussed in teachers' meetings as a part of programme management. Teachers and programme management analyze course feedback and identify areas for improvement and the effectiveness of each course. The programmes also seek input from representatives of industry on programme objectives, design, and outcomes, with a focus on graduate employability. Teachers are encouraged to inform students how previous feedback has been utilised in the continuous improvement process of the course. The Student Forum, chaired by the Vice Rector of Education, calls together student representatives of all disciplines to discuss the development plans of education.

## Regional, national, and international stakeholder involvement

[UVA's active cooperation with the surrounding ecosystem](#) of employers is an important feature in developing ILOs. University- and programme-level advisors provide input on work life trends and emerging competency needs. UVA uses industry representatives in various educational roles to support the work life relevance of UVA's education, as visiting lecturers, real-life cases, and thesis project providers.

International partnerships through different networks impact the development and continuous improvement of education. UVA draws on a wide provision of international exchange and double degree opportunities, which are intended to influence the development of curricula and equip students with skills and competences that will benefit their future careers. In utilising the international partnerships, UVA seeks to advance internationalisation at home and ensure an international learning experience through the development of COIL offerings ([Collaborative Online International Learning](#)), [summer school](#) programmes and BIPs (short [Blended Intensive Programmes](#)).

## University Services providing expert support in achieving the goals

The University Services units provide professional services for the entire university community and support the university's research and teaching activities and societal impact. UVA's University Services include Study and Education Services, and International Services. According to the service promise "Smooth service with a big heart through teamwork," expert support is

based on active interaction with customer groups. Services are continuously improved by carefully listening to customer feedback and responding in a meaningful way and in cooperation with the whole university community.

### **Strengths**

Collaboration and communication across programmes, commitment and collegiality among teaching faculty and 'team teaching'

Use of versatile data (feedback, learning analytics, student progression, self-assessments, accreditations, internal and external stakeholder cooperation) in the development of courses and programmes

Public course descriptions and harmonized course syllabus so students are provided with detailed information to help in planning studies

### **Enhancement areas**

Enhancing the role of the Programme Development Committee (KOKE) as a forum for communication, developing UVA education, and sharing best practices.

Strengthening consistency and common approaches across all fields of study and interdisciplinary programs

More systematic follow-up of graduate placement at programme/subject level and connections to curriculum development and planning

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#### Student feedback utilised systematically

Based on the audit visit, student feedback at UVA is appropriately collected and well processed. The university regularly conducts student surveys to measure their experiences and gather feedback on required changes through the Peppi system. Schools and teachers carry out feedback sessions and their own feedback surveys. Feedback is also collected through student forums. Students' communication channels with academic faculty and study counsellors are well established and operational. Students are reportedly aware of opportunities to contact their student representatives, including those in UVA's board and the student association board, who advocate for them and follow up on issues raised.

Student feedback is discussed by the academic faculty and study programme management in teachers' meetings, and it is considered in the curriculum process and when preparing for the upcoming academic year. The audit team welcomes UVA's recent piloting of AI for analysing student feedback, particularly for cases of cross-disciplinary and qualitative feedback. The academic faculty acknowledges the value of student feedback and perceives it as useful for study programme development. According to the audit visit, teachers have been instructed to select three areas for improvement and three things that are going well, based on feedback.

Students receive regular feedback on their feedback through student representatives, programme management or academic faculty. Based on the audit visit, teachers communicate

the feedback received to students in the following year. Students are clearly aware of the changes implemented because of their feedback, either from the academic faculty or their peers. During the audit visit, students mentioned that their feedback had led to, for instance, the introduction of flexible and transdisciplinary study pathways, switching from end-of-course feedback to mid-course feedback, and running popular courses more frequently. According to the visit, teachers and students can also give feedback on support services on a regular basis through surveys. Student perspectives on support services and guidance are debated at student forums jointly with the UVA administration.

The good feedback culture of UVA is appreciated by both those who give and receive it. While students, teachers, staff members, external stakeholders and leadership are committed into the strong feedback culture, the audit team recommends that the university includes a more detailed description of the student feedback collection and utilisation process to the quality management manual. This would involve when and how students give graduate-level feedback, who is involved in designing the questionnaire, who delivers the survey, how feedback is collected, who is involved in analysing the received feedback, to whom the feedback is reported, and how feedback is communicated to graduates. In a few cases, the communication of feedback-on-feedback could be further improved so that students better understand the quality culture.

Student feedback has a tangible impact on the study programmes at all levels, from undergraduate to doctoral. Along with the programme self-assessment tool, it is used to monitor and evaluate the degree programmes, especially bachelor's programmes. UVA uses national surveys to monitor the employment of master's and PhD graduates. It wants to ensure that students' competences remain relevant and up to date in terms of societal challenges, labour market needs and research results to address these challenges.

In addition to internal feedback mechanisms, UVA has a strong focus on external feedback encompassing international accreditations and benchmarks in developing its programmes. According to the self-assessment report and audit visit, UVA's education strategy is that all its study programmes have at least one international accreditation. Based on the audit visit, accreditations have contributed to the introduction of curriculum maps in programme design and planning and of the Assurance of Learning (AoL) tool to measure student learning achievements. The audit team encourages UVA to continue to use the results of accreditations in the development of study programmes and harmonisation of common procedures.