KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF HAAGA-HELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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1.1 The planning of education

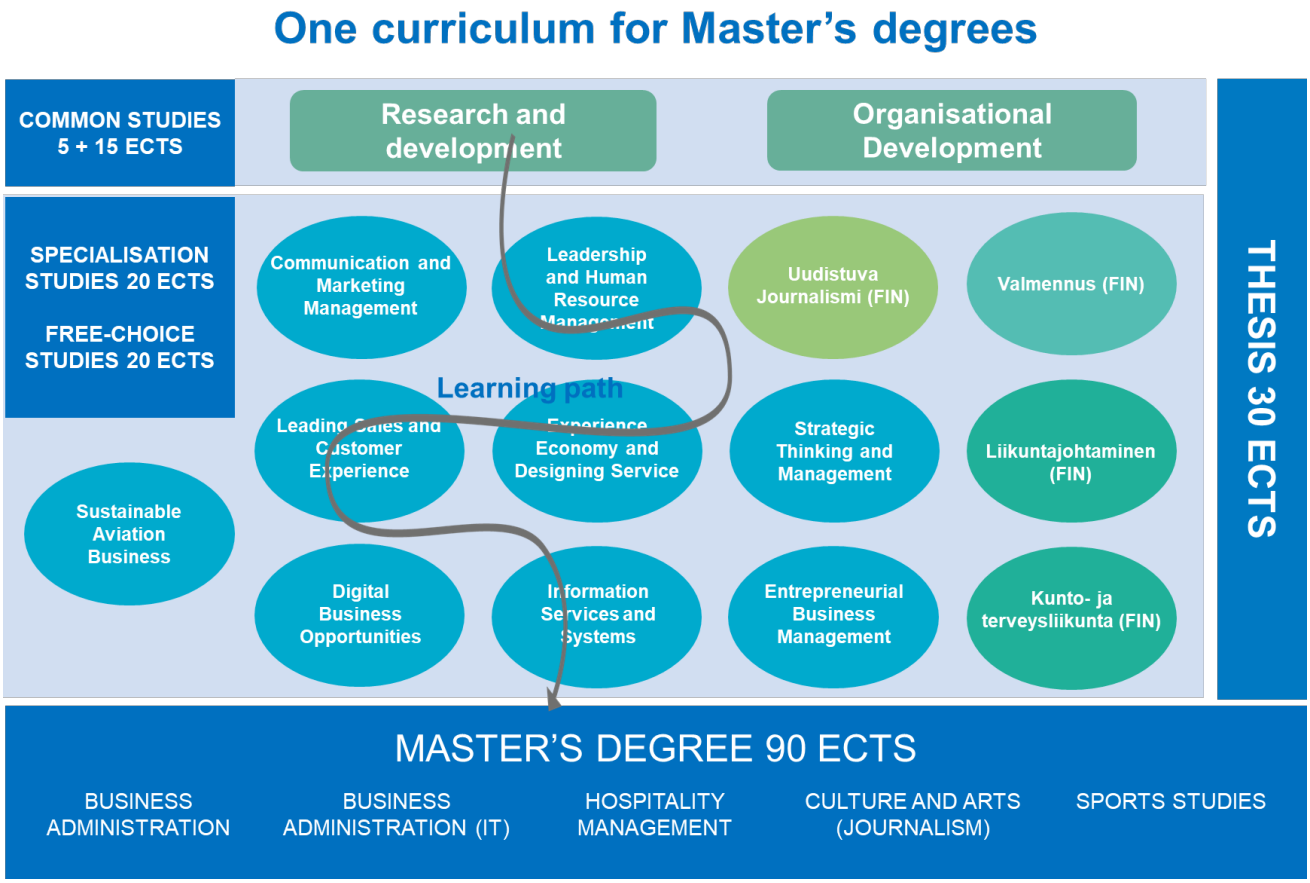
- Högskolans självvärdering

Pedagogical vision guides planning

Our pedagogical vision is founded on dynamic competence, connecting learning with work life and offering flexible and diverse learning paths. Students are active agents, and our teachers work together, sharing knowledge and creating new information and methods.

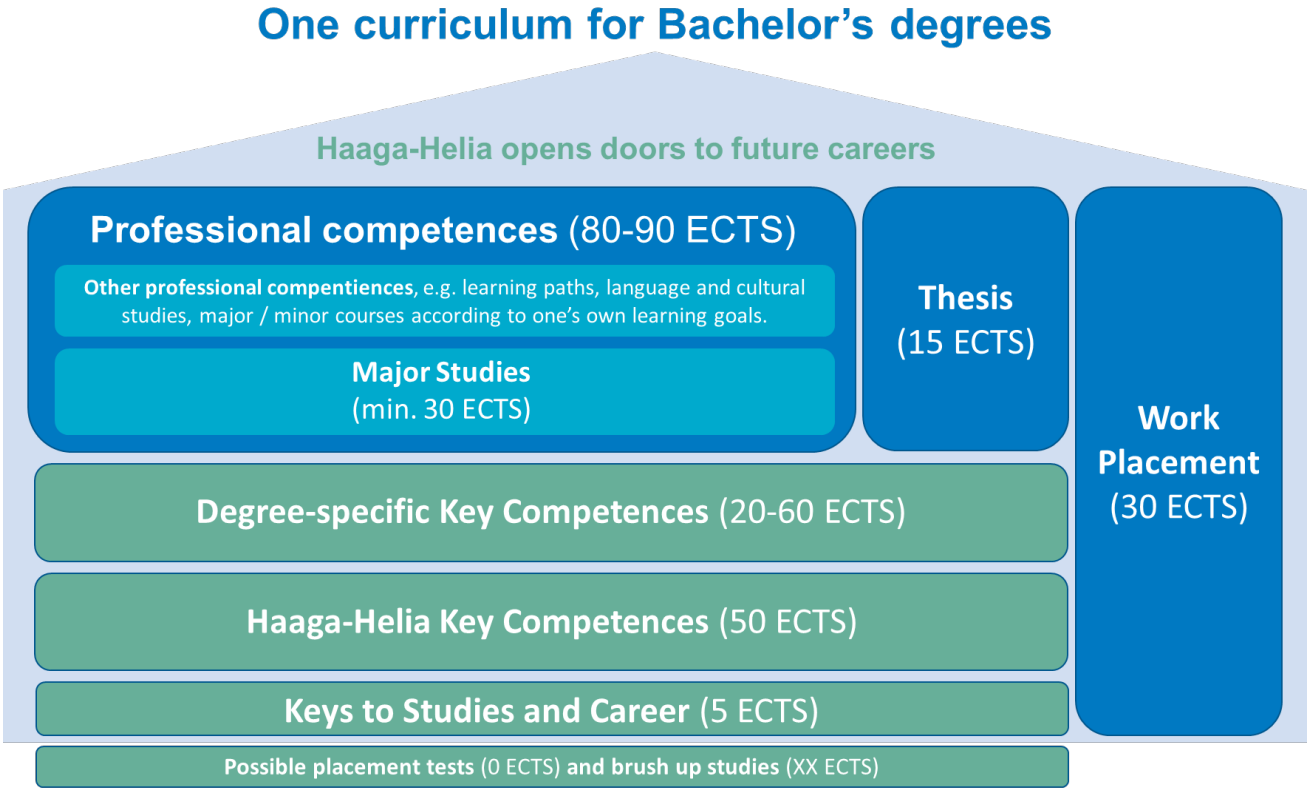
Curricula linked to strategy

Our education has undergone a major reform derived from our strategy. The process started with master's level in 2019, followed by bachelor's level and continuous education in 2022. The staff, students, and stakeholders all participated in the curricula renewal.



Picture 7. One curriculum for Master's degree

In the new curricula, specialisations complement each other, creating more diverse study options. We noticed that the variety of options requires more guidance, and a new student counselling model was created. It is currently used for bachelor's level and being adopted to the master's level as well.



Picture 8. One curriculum for Bachelor's degree

Our curricula structure allows flexible tuning and updating. Changes to the degree requirements that affect the curricula structure are taken to the Management Group and the Collegiate Body for approval. For each strategy year, certain focus areas are selected. To ensure that the strategic goals are turned into operational activity, they are discussed at the new OSTU (Osaamisen tulevaisuus-Future of Competences) forum. At the monthly OSTU meetings, the supervisors of the educational areas meet with Management Group and the competence area and research area directors. The agenda is often heavy, and focus needs to be on the strategically important issues.

Opening doors to international careers

The contents and learning objectives of our curricula are based on a strong theoretical background and constantly reviewed to meet the needs of various industries. We have an active partner company network enhanced by teachers' own contacts and collaborations. The relevance of education to businesses is ensured through continuous dialogue, also taking place during course projects. Through company cooperation, work placements and projects students create networks. Education reform has strengthened collaboration and unified practices.

Our curricula are planned to ensure international competences, and to enable a study period abroad. We offer language and culture studies, as well as many other courses taught in English with multicultural study groups. Students are encouraged to complete an exchange or a work placement abroad. The mobility period is included in the individual study plan and credits completed abroad recognised as part of the degree. International Services give support, guidance and funding for mobility. The pandemic has decreased mobility and we need to work on reaching

future targets.

Flexibility supports continuous learning

Continuous learning is organised through the Open University of Applied Sciences (Open UAS). The course selection at the Open UAS is based on the courses in the degree curricula. Our new modular curricula structures support continuous learning and the needs of our Open UAS students through flexibility. The Open UAS course portfolio is constantly reviewed and renewed based on the demand from learners and employers.

The education reform has brought variety to our course implementation methods, which are contact, blended, online and virtual. Our day-time programmes offer more contact implementations, whereas in multiform programmes online and virtual implementations are more common. While the reform brought flexibility to the methods, the descriptions and assessment criteria were unified. Each course has assessment criteria for grades 1, 3 and 5. Teachers are provided with templates and workshops to help to formulate the course descriptions supporting equal assessment.

Planning based on European structures

Our degree qualifications are built on the European EQF levels. The intended learning outcomes of our programmes are based on the European EQF levels 6 and 7, corresponding FiNQF levels 6 and 7. The planning is based on current research and the needs of our stakeholders, including the staff, students, alumni, as well as our national and international partner companies and organisations. In planning the workload, we follow the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). In competence-based education, the workload varies from student to student. Our teachers are well trained, and we trust their expertise in the evaluation process.

Student feedback contributes to the planning. Estimating the workload is part of feedback and students are encouraged to reflect on the intended learning outcomes. Students, alumni and businesses are invited to the education planning workshops. As the planning process is practice-oriented, we have noticed that the theoretical basis needs to be documented more clearly.

Curriculum changes are taken to the Management Group and to the Collegiate Body. Degree level development is discussed in degrees and with relevant competence areas, as well as in OSTU meetings. Due to many discussions, the procedure might be time-consuming.

Projects contribute to education planning

Our lecturers and principal lecturers are active in RDI projects and integrate project work in their courses. Projects also ideate thesis topics. Research is also linked to education through involving lecturers and students in projects. All staff members are encouraged to participate in project applications and in funded projects, also benefiting education planning. New projects search for members through eg., our intranet’s Competence Market. The procedure works quite well but depends on the activity of individuals.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
Education reform enables a wider choice of studies for the students	Education reform challenges the planning of course portfolio
Working-life relevant education and agile reactions to changing environment	Counselling for ensuring relevant course choices
Applying advanced and modern learning environments	Systematisation of collaboration with companies and other stakeholders

1.1 The planning of education

- Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

A dynamic competence-based and working-life oriented approach is an essential feature for Haaga-Helia – enhancement areas exist in communication

The newly implemented institutional strategy (Haaga-Helia Strategy for 2021-2025/2030) and the ideas and aims of the educational reform are deeply rooted in Haaga-Helia’s pedagogical vision to be a HEI with strong networks in Finland and abroad. Furthermore, they are based on the idea of “dynamic competence”. The self-assessment report and the interviews provided evidence that Haaga-Helia's community members are courageous and willing to do their best in realising this pedagogical vision. There is a clear focus on utilising the possibilities offered by technology to improve the quality and flexibility of education, i.e., through enabling flexible and diverse learning paths. In regard to curricula, the new strategy takes into account conformity with the qualification goals of the National qualification framework, compliance with legal requirements, in particular state-specific structural requirements, as well as the corresponding FiNQF and European EQF levels.

The audit team was able to ascertain through the site visit as well as through the self-assessment report that the quality assurance measures were developed after thorough preliminary clarifications and in-depth consultations with staff, students and stakeholders and are now well accepted and supported among all throughout the HEI. Haaga-Helia considers the competence orientation of their degree programmes to be a crucial quality standard. This allows for adaptability and modernization through flexible tuning. Hence, the programmes are based on action-oriented learning objectives and competence-oriented forms of examination, enabling not only learning theoretical knowledge but also workforce skills, opening the idea of continuous learning.

Haaga-Helia has established close project partnerships and networks with regional working life, enabling them to educate a skilled workforce that is well-equipped to meet future demands and that reacts to changing environments in an agile manner. A crucial element of this approach is

the active participation of all stakeholders, which was confirmed in the interviews, as teachers, supervisors of educational and competence areas and representatives of working life have continuous discussions on this matter. This collaboration has facilitated the inclusion of business stakeholders in development processes, providing valuable input and feedback to Haaga-Helia.

Nevertheless, the systematic inclusion of feedback from all stakeholders could be further improved along with the clear communication of these processes. In the interviews, it became clear that cooperation and communication can still be expanded and strengthened regarding planning of education.

Students' learning experiences are focused but may vary from student to student

Haaga-Helia has made substantial efforts to bringing learning environments, RDI projects and working-life relevant education together. Especially the Work&Study model offers many opportunities for students to practice experimental activities. The new concept of gaining competences through working life experience is also evident in summative and formative assessments, which connect practical work with the relevant theory. The progress of students is also well monitored by means of data use, i.e., the study management system.

Both national and international networks, such as 3AMK and Ulysseus, offer a great opportunity for students to complete courses at other institutions. Nevertheless, the audit team learned from the interviews and the workshops that students' learning experiences as well as work placement and internship opportunities are to some extent uneven regarding international (incoming) students. The interviews underlined that the opportunities for international students are limited to jobs where minimal to no Finnish language skills are required. It was reported that there is a "huge gap between native Finnish speakers and non-Finnish speakers when it comes to given opportunities" and that "It feels that the Finnish students have more connections and resources than the international students". The audit team encourages Haaga-Helia to better prepare international students for the Finnish labour market and to enhance opportunities for internationalization, i.e., by taking care of providing equal learning and research experiences for all students—domestic and international—in all programmes, and formats. Additionally, during the student workshops, it was noted that some course materials for international students were not available in English or were not up to date. Students also expressed that some teachers should improve their language skills to better facilitate the learning of international students.

Curriculum design and agile enhancement processes enable a flexible choice of studies and a modern learning environment but are still in transition

Haaga-Helia has a very good reputation among students and among regional stakeholders because of systematic planning processes that ensure relevance for working life and that focus on the needs of their students. The interviewees valued the fact that Haaga-Helia offers and enables flexibility in its curriculum development and renewal process, and recognizes the crucial

role that students play in setting objectives. The decision-making processes, competencies and responsibilities in the management system for teaching and learning are clearly defined. To ensure that the strategic goals are turned into operational activities, they are discussed regularly with a variety of stakeholders (i.e., in OSTU meetings). Through the interviews, it has become clear to the audit team that Haaga-Helia’s curriculum work was developed systematically with the aim of continuously improving the quality of its degree programmes. At Haaga-Helia, objectives are established collaboratively by various focus groups, including students. Hence, the planning of education and degree programmes are based on clear development and planning cycles (PDCA) and, from the auditors' point of view, guarantee the implementation of qualification goals and targeted learning outcomes in degree programme concepts that are within the scope of the programme and ensure the achievement of the targeted qualification level and qualification profile. This enables target-oriented learning and enables a focus on the active role of students in their own learning process to obtain competence, to learn work-life skills and to prepare for developing and researching work life. As part of curriculum development, the assessment criteria, assessment formats, didactic methods, and learning environments are aligned with the intended learning outcomes. This process includes evaluation of student workload, application of ECTS, appropriate modularization, adequate examination organization, advising and counselling services, consideration of gender equity, and accommodation of the special needs of students. Feedback from course evaluations and student representatives, such as workload feedback, is also taken into account when planning educational programs. The interviews confirmed the strong involvement of students in the programme development cycle.

Nevertheless, in the interviews it became clear that the education reform is still in a transitional phase, as stated in the self-assessment report. It should be consequently followed up and improved, i.e., in the focus of planning of course portfolios as well as regarding the equality of workload for all study options (virtual, online, blended or contact).