

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

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1.1 The planning of education

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

National and international framework

Finnish University education is subject to national legislation (e.g. the Universities Act, and the Government Decree on University Degrees and Professional Specialisation Programmes). There is a comprehensive regulation on the degrees which the universities are entitled and obliged to offer, on the structures of the degrees, and on the qualifications of certain professions. UTU provides education on the 1st cycle (bachelor), 2nd cycle (master), and 3rd cycle (doctorate), and the degrees correspond with the Finnish National Framework of Qualifications and Other Competence Modules (FiNQF) levels 6 to 8 accordingly. The scope of the studies adheres to the ECTS credit system.

Strategic approach within the University community

UTU has defined shared guidelines for the systematic planning process of education. The 1st and 2nd cycle degree programmes must relate to the research fields represented at the UTU. The UTU Board decides on new degree programmes (unless stipulated in the legislation, in which case the UTU Board has made the decision to apply for a new field of education) and also on discontinuing degree programmes. Even though the UTU Board holds the strategic mandate, the line of preparation ensures broad participation of the University community, including students.

The criteria and process of starting new degree programmes are described in detail in the decision by the UTU Rector, complemented by the regulations on joint degree programmes. The strategic approach is strongly linked with the decision-making. Doctoral training at UTU occurs in the doctoral programmes, appointed by the Rector.

The proposal for the number of admitted students per 1st and 2nd degree programme in each year is prepared by the faculties and presented to the Teaching and Learning Council that forwards the matter to the UTU Board for decision.

The curriculum planning is based on the general curriculum guidelines by the Vice Rector where, among other things, the main goals of the UTU Strategy are stressed. The faculties offer more detailed instructions for the departments' curriculum planning. In addition, the systematic self-evaluation process of the degree programmes covers different aspects of the Strategy.

There is a strategic guideline and programme for digitalisation in UTU. This guideline indicates the direction for developing e-teaching and e-learning in the future. UTU is also actively involved in the national digital platform [Digivisio](#).

Future-directed and student-centred teaching and learning

The basic principle of UTU is that teaching is based on the latest research. Teachers are encouraged to publish results on their research and are expected to allocate a part of their annual working hours to research. The career path system was recently renewed (University Board's decision on 16 Dec 2022). UTU is introducing the senior university lecturer position, which shows high appreciation of teaching merits and development. Doctoral researchers can also participate in teaching.

The current cycle for curricula planning at UTU is two academic years. The curricula in degree programmes (in all three cycles) are based on learning outcomes and they are constructively aligned and student-centred. The faculties give detailed instructions to curriculum planning where teachers and researchers are asked to ensure that every course has clearly described learning outcomes, contents, teaching methods, and assessment and feedback methods that are in line with each other. In the doctoral programmes, UTUGS and the management group of each doctoral programme also have a role in the curricula planning together with the faculties.

The curriculum planning is carried out in close co-operation between the faculty, teaching staff, administrative staff, and students. The PEPPI study system is used as a tool in the curriculum planning. In order to share good practices on curriculum planning, the centralised Educational Support Services offer lectures and workshops to the UTU staff involved in the process. Many units organise additional workshops to support their own curriculum planning. Students take part in preparing the curricula as members of the faculty-level working groups. UTUGS's working group focusing in training coordinates the general training ensemble available for all doctoral researchers.

Teachers apply the guidelines on study workload when planning and implementing teaching. One ECTS corresponds to 27 hours of student work. Students evaluate their workload per credit along with other feedback. In the curriculum planning guideline, the Vice Rector strongly encourages faculties to use all the available feedback material. The curricula are accepted by the faculty councils.

Strategic aspects in curriculum planning

The needs of *working life* along with generic skills are closely considered when planning the curricula of the degree programmes. Representatives of stakeholders are either included in the working groups preparing curricula or their views are otherwise considered in the planning process. Most faculties have advisory boards with stakeholders as members.

Internationalisation is recognised as an integral part of UTU education in order to guarantee that students acquire the skills that are needed in order to operate in an international environment (see more in the [UTU international programme](#)). All students have the possibility and are encouraged to take part in international student exchange and all courses completed during the exchange can be included in the UTU degree. The [UNICOM](#) project promotes the placement of international talents in the Finnish labour market.

Sustainable development is one of UTU's strategic underlying themes. There is an ongoing work at UTU on sustainable development and including sustainable education in curriculum planning and in teaching and learning practices. As first steps in the process, the SDGs have now been highlighted in course definitions in the PEPPI study system.

Continuous learning is emphasised throughout the UTU Strategy. [Continuous learning](#) opportunities are offered via open university studies, specialisation studies, non-degree studies, executive education and customised training, open study materials, and online courses (MOOCs). In the planning of curricula, the aim is to ensure that UTU graduates acquire the skills and motivation to maintain and enhance their expertise throughout their career.

| Strengths | Enhancement areas |
|---|---|
| Structured programme and curriculum planning process | Development of digital systems and better utilisation of information in order to support management and teaching development, e.g. monitoring of studies, preparation of curricula, course feedback |
| Students are active members in curriculum work | Collaboration between different faculties should be further enhanced |
| Multidisciplinary university offers a large selection of studies for students | It would be important and rational to take continuous learning better into account in curriculum planning already from the beginning of the process. |
| Curricula based on learning outcomes | |
| The structure of doctoral training (UTUGS) | |

1.1 The planning of education

- Auditointiryhmän arvio

The development of education provision is strategy-driven and based on the needs of working life

The University of Turku's (UTU) educational provision is linked and developed in line with its strategic objectives. The University's strategy emphasises research orientation and the relevance of education to working life. Multidisciplinary research, research-based education, entrepreneurship studies and sustainable development are examples of UTU's current strategic priorities that permeate all its activities.

The development of degree programmes is systematic and based on common policies. The procedures and criteria for the establishment of new degree programmes and international degree programmes are defined by a decision of the Rector. The University Board has a formal role in starting and closing degree programmes. Furthermore, the UTU-level Teaching and Learning Council (TLC) plays an essential role in coordinating programme development, student admissions development and the overall direction of the University's educational provision.

The development of educational provision is based on the needs of working life. External stakeholders and alumni are also heard in education development. A recent example of this is the establishment of the Faculty of Technology in 2021. Based on extensive demand from the regional industry, the decision was made in 2019 to establish a new Faculty of Technology based on two already existing departments. Companies and the whole region have responded positively to the faculty. There is more interest and commitment than expected. One indication of this is the 14 donated professorships.

Curriculum development is a systematic and participatory process

UTU's curriculum process is in-depth, guided and well-supported. The timing of the curriculum process, the division of labour, the features of a good curriculum and priorities for the 2022–2024 curriculum period are described in the general curriculum guidelines by the Vice Rector. The Faculty Councils approve the curricula. All faculties apply similar procedures and the same structures but with their own specific policy emphases and modifications. The Teaching and Learning Council discusses how these practices work and is an essential forum for sharing good practices.

The audit visit provided evidence that curriculum planning is carried out as a community-based process and in close cooperation between the faculty, teaching staff, administrative staff and students. The teaching development teams operating at the faculty level ensure that feedback collected from students, external stakeholders and employers is processed and utilised in the curricula development process. Employers' feedback is collected in several ways, including surveys, stakeholder meetings and interviews and via advisory boards at the faculty level. Employers' feedback has affected, for instance, the definition of intended generic and field-specific competences and the launching of new courses relevant to the needs of working life. The

faculties continuously strive to develop their stakeholder engagement. For example, the Faculty of Humanities will launch a stakeholder and alumni survey next autumn to ask them about their expectations and suggestions to support curriculum development.

In addition to employer engagement, one of UTU's strengths is students' strong involvement and influence on the curricula, teaching and learning development processes. Student representation extends from high levels (the Collegium, the TLC and faculty boards) to the unit-level working groups. According to the interviews, student and Student Union feedback has been well-heard, for instance, in reforming curricula structures and course scheduling.

Based on the audit interviews and documents available on the UTU's intranet, there is constructive alignment between the teaching methods and learning assessment. Managers at the University are strongly encouraged by top management to guide teachers to utilise the available pedagogical and other support services offered. UTUPEDA Centre for University Pedagogy and Research supports teachers in developing learning outcomes and competence-based teaching and learning.

The curriculum process ensures that the degree programmes and other provisions are planned with clearly defined learning outcomes. Degrees are ensured to correspond with the Finnish National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules (FINQF).

The University of Turku has set out common guidelines for the definition of students' workload according to the principles of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). The workload is continuously monitored as part of student feedback. However, student interviews revealed some variation in experienced workload in relation to the defined workload.

The development of multidisciplinary teaching is one of UTU's topical priorities

Basic principles of teaching are based on the latest research. Audit interviews with researchers indicated that research is integrated into education in multiple ways but depends highly on the field. Typically, research results are integrated into the study contents. Students may take part in interpreting research results and may be offered the possibility to conduct thesis work in research groups. Specialisation options and research connections are available for students in some fields, such as medicine, as early as the first study year. The connection is not as evident in some other fields, and research is more in the background. Students' views also reflected field-specific variation in research-based teaching.

UTU's current priorities are strengthening multidisciplinary in teaching and providing a more open curriculum for students. Each of UTU's six strategic foci and profiles has a steering group with members from all faculties, and they are working on bridging the gaps between research and education. The University's management acknowledged that achieving multidisciplinary is more difficult in teaching than research. However, UTU is taking determined steps towards multidisciplinary and is revising its teaching accordingly. As stated by the Rectorate, the aim is to achieve fewer bachelor's programmes but with more focus, higher multidisciplinary and

better options.

At the time of the audit visit, the University of Turku was preparing multidisciplinary study programmes. The Vice Rector for Education was in the process of holding discussions with faculties and deans about increasing ready-made multidisciplinary packages for students and offering them wider opportunities to choose courses. Simultaneously, UTU has recognised that the faculties, study fields and students are different, so the question is how to balance flexibility in study choices with ready-made packages. The audit team advocates that the University create more open curricula to encourage students to develop broader skills and move towards innovation and creativity. While doing so, UTU should ensure sufficient guidance resources for drafting and monitoring students' personal study plans and career planning.

Internationalisation and continuous learning needs are ensured in education planning

Internationalisation is a recognised part of UTU's educational provision. UTU students' international exchanges and internships are mostly well-enabled by curriculum structures and information and support provided by staff members. The incoming international students participate in short-term exchange programmes or two-year international master's programmes.

Regarding continuous learning, the current provision clearly serves various needs and learners. The University of Turku has a broad offering of continuous learning possibilities, and the Open University is a well-received institution among students, providing possibilities for upskilling, qualification for new positions and even an entryway to degree studies. Furthermore, UTU graduates can use the offers for free for the first two years after graduation. The interviewed continuous learning students particularly appreciated Open University services, practical support for continuous studies and accessibility services.

The quality management of continuous learning provision follows the same criteria as degree education. At the time of the audit visit, UTU was creating guidelines for online provisions. The audit team recommends that the University ensure systematic formats to evaluate and develop courses at the Open University.