

# AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

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## 1.2 The implementation of education

### - HEI's self-assessment

The most central University-level regulation for the implementation of education is *the University of Turku Regulation on Studies*.

### Student selection

In 2022, UTU was the most popular Finnish university in the number of applicants applying to the programmes taught in Finnish.

On both national and University-level, there are common admission criteria that are followed at UTU. The most of the field-specific admission criteria are planned in national co-operation with other universities (joint admissions). The admission criteria are approved by the faculties and they are published on the national [Studyinfo portal](#). The student selection decisions are based on the admission criteria and they are appealable. A Rector's decision defines the ways of proving language skills in the student selection processes in all three cycles.

Doctoral training can be accessed through the doctoral programmes. The decisions on granting the right to pursue a doctoral degree at UTU are made by the faculties based on the DP's proposals. There are two annual calls for applications for the right to pursue a doctoral degree.

*The recognition of prior learning* is carefully taken in account and steered by Vice Rector's Guideline for RPL at UTU.

## Wide range of teaching methods and student-centred learning

All teaching and learning in UTU is based on ethical guidelines.

In the Vice Rector's curriculum guideline, in the UTU pedagogical studies provided by [UTUPeda unit](#), and in staff training courses, teachers are asked to pay attention to constructively aligned planning and implementation of education.

In UTU's pedagogical studies, teachers are advised to use a wide range of teaching methods. UTU's learning environments (digital and traditional) and teaching aim at enhancing students' self-regulated and active role in their learning process. The used teaching methods, learning platforms, and course assignments are planned to activate their agency in order to develop their expertise. The feedback from the students proof how effective the used methods have been for teaching and learning and how the learning outcomes have been achieved.

The feedback that the students get from their studies is vital for high-quality learning. In continuing assessment, the teacher gives feedback to the student on smaller learning tasks during the course. If the teacher is using traditional assessment, i.e. e-exams at the end of the course, the feedback is given to the students by assessing the e-exam on a numerical scale (0-5). Students can also get feedback from their fellow students.

The student dashboard in the PEPPI study system provides information on the progress of studies in relation to the student's personal study plan. On the e-exam platform, the teachers can easily give qualitative feedback in addition to a numeric grade.

*Connection to working life* is one of the key areas in the implementation of education. The faculties have several ways of integrating working life into studies: internships, excursions, project works, participation in mentoring, working-life-oriented and practical courses in the curricula, visiting lecturers, and professors of practice. In doctoral training, one of UTUGS's unique features is the extensive comprehensive transferable skills training available for all doctoral researchers.

As one of the few Finnish universities, UTU grants all degree students an internship subsidy once during their studies. Students can also apply for grants for internship periods abroad.

The Career Services coordinates the internship programme. CS also gives all students and doctoral researchers an equal and cross-disciplinary opportunity to identify and increase working life relevance, e.g., by obtaining and transmitting up-to-date information through career coaching and CS's work-life connections.

## Flexible study paths and good possibilities for mobility

Most degree structures enable flexible study paths and possibilities for mobility for students. The students can include studies from other faculties or HEIs in their degree programme. There are also interdisciplinary study modules within UTU. During 2023, UTU will integrate the national

cross-institutional service into its operations, which will enable the students to choose courses from another HEIs in Finland even more flexibly.

UTU has a wide range of student exchange agreements with HEIs around the world. Each year, approximately 500 UTU students spend a semester or an academic year abroad at the partner universities, and an equivalent number of students arrive from those universities to Turku. All UTU students accepted to an outgoing exchange programme receive a grant. UTU is a member of the [EC2U Alliance](#). The co-operation produces synergy benefits for education, research and innovation.

## High quality guidance to study paths

The system and goals of student guidance at different stages of studies are described in the Rector's decision. At the beginning of studies, students' engagement in university studies and the academic community are supported by peer support (student tutors) and academic support (teacher tutors). Furthermore, study advisors in each faculty provide an orientation programme for new students. All students have a study planning advisor who supports the study planning process with individual and/or group guidance sessions. During the studies, the teacher tutors, study advisors, career counsellors, study psychologists, and some of the planning officers provide individual and/or group guidance for students according to their needs. UTU also offers optional courses to promote study and career planning skills.

To intervene in the termination of studies, UTU offers the student individual counselling or peer support. UTU has also implemented a motivation profile tool to support students who struggle with motivation. Some of the degree programmes use their students' study data to follow the progress of studies and to provide support for those who seem to drop from the normal study pace.

Every student and staff member have the right to a good and balanced study and work environment. The well-being of students and personnel stems from balanced, inspiring, and functional everyday life in the UTU community. There is a special early support model for situations where there is a concern about a student or conflict in the student community as well as situations where students notice inappropriate behaviour or face other difficulties (see chapter 3.2).

## Early support situations, actors and responsibilities

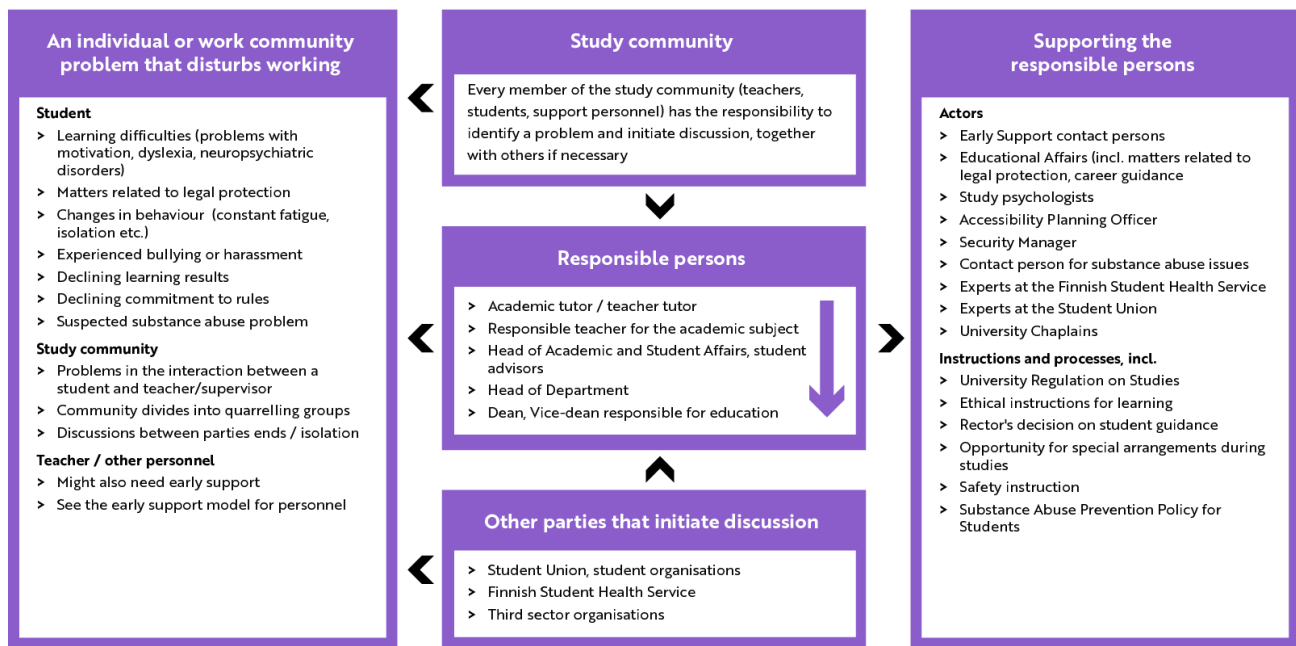


Figure 4. Early support model for students at UTU

In doctoral training, supervision plays a crucial role. The Rector's decision defines the guidelines of supervision of doctoral researchers at UTU. In 2017, UTUGS introduced an annual career and review discussion model which gives every doctoral researcher an opportunity to discuss their career goals with the supervisor and/or with the career counsellor.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
The student admission system is strictly based on national legislation and university regulation	Feedback to students on their studies
There are various guidance services to support students at different stages of their studies	Despite of good guidance and support services, there is still need to develop these activities. In particular, the guidance of the international master's degree students requires development
UTUGS annual career and review discussion model	

## 1.2 The implementation of education

### - Assessment of the audit team

Students are provided with a variety of teaching methods but should be

## provided feedback on their learning

UTU's regulations regarding studies and admission are transparent and understandable. The University's website contains all relevant information, although the English websites are occasionally hard to navigate. UTU applies the regulations and provisions regarding recognition of prior learning consistently and transparently.

The University of Turku provides a rich menu of teaching and assessment methods to support students' target-oriented learning. The interviewed students mentioned, for instance, discussions, simulations, learning diaries, learning games and video production. UTU teachers are encouraged to use blended, contact and remote teaching and continuously develop their teaching.

There is a high level of satisfaction, especially among the interviewed master's students, with the flexibility of course provisions and skills provided towards professional life. The students appreciated the flexibility of curricula structures, free choice of minors from a wide range of provisions, possibilities for specialisations within the programmes and flexibility to study on different UTU campuses.

Flexible study paths between different higher education institutions are also part of a successful learning experience. The close cooperation and cross-study opportunities between the University of Turku, Åbo Akademi and the Turku University of Applied Sciences support these. However, the possibilities of flexible learning pathways could be further developed and made more widely known to students.

Based on the audit interviews, especially bachelor's students wish for more feedback on their learning. Some interviewed students explained this as a lack of exam feedback, so they struggle to understand their primary knowledge deficits. Other students stated that personalised feedback is available when they ask for it. UTU has identified these challenges and is working to solve them. The audit team recommends UTU to continue seeking a variety of ways to give students feedback on their learning to support the achievement of learning objectives.

The question of sufficient feedback on learning is also driven by growing student demand for individualised feedback, which teaching staff cannot always supply. An increase in technical support, for instance, automated feedback or even the use of AI, as well as compulsory teaching trainings could help improve feedback management.

Student progress is supported by study planning processes and monitored at a higher level by the UTU Management Team, the University Board and as part of the faculties' annual planning processes. The audit visit showed that quantitative monitoring is being improved through the knowledge-based management initiative (see Chapter 3.1). Monitoring doctoral researchers' progress within the doctoral school is overseen by UTUGS and through an annual career and review discussion. As mentioned in the audit interviews, monitoring the doctoral researchers' study progress outside the doctoral school has proved more challenging.

## Entrepreneurial skills are integrated into some courses but are not yet on a visible level in all programmes

The University of Turku aims to be an entrepreneurial university. Demonstrating UTU's aspiration to improve its entrepreneurial approach further, it chose to undergo an external accreditation process focusing on entrepreneurship. The audit team commends the University of Turku as the first Finnish university to receive the Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU) accreditation label.

Entrepreneurial skills are integrated into some courses but not yet on a visible level in all programmes. Based on graduate feedback, which was handled by the audit team as additional audit material from UTU, currently only a small proportion of students feel that their studies develop entrepreneurial skills and competencies.

The audit team recommends that UTU continue developing entrepreneurship studies and strengthening entrepreneurial skills in its curricula. A more systematic approach to cooperation with the corporate sector could improve students' entrepreneurial skills and seeing entrepreneurship as a career option.

## The University of Turku has invested a lot in guiding and supporting students in a variety of ways, but services need increased visibility

UTU emphasises supporting students and offers several forms of guidance and support services to support academic study skills, study and career planning progress and psychological and general well-being. Based on interviews, 2023 has been designated as the Year of Student Guidance at UTU, implying that teachers promote guidance services for students and that every teacher should know them. Overall, interviewed students appreciated available guidance and well-being services and teacher tutoring.

In addition to the guidance provided by the University, the Student Union also plays a vital role in providing student tutoring and peer support and contributing to the development of UTU services. On the Student Union's initiative, the University of Turku has launched an online Mind programme, including a trained peer, mentoring services and student events. The Student Union has also developed an own policy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), independently from UTU.

Despite the wide range of supplies and all available information on guidance and well-being services on the intranet, some students still feel it is difficult to find this information. A big step forward in gathering information on student services in one place will be introducing the Tuudo application, which students look forward to.

The audit interviews highlighted student well-being issues, in particular the requirement of perfection many students set for themselves, loneliness and reintegration into studies after a period of isolation during the pandemic. In order to ensure student well-being, the risks of study

burnout need to be minimised. The audit team recommends that UTU pursue the work to ensure that support services are visible and accessible. It should continue interacting with students to analyse their well-being issues and develop preventive measures.