KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

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1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

The Feedback system and follow-up of education

The student feedback system approved by the Teaching and Learning Council is at the core of the quality management in education. Feedback is collected from students on individual courses, after the first year of studies, when completing the bachelor's degree (The Finnish Bachelor's Graduate Survey) and the master's degree as well as five years after graduation (National Master's Career Monitoring). The course feedback is gathered in different ways in the faculties.

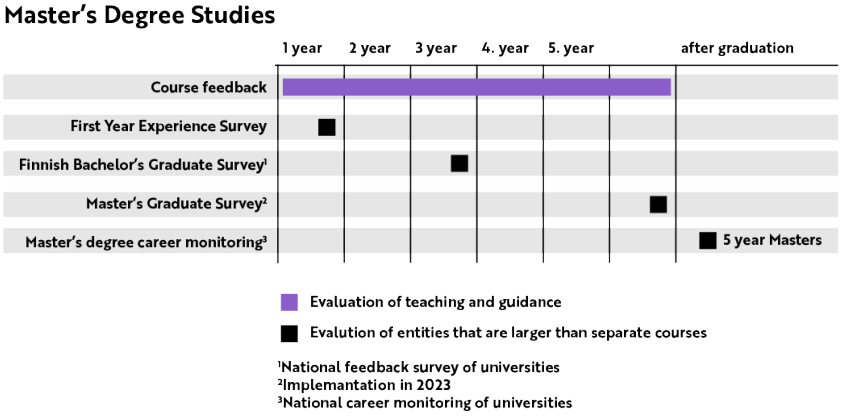

Figure 5. Collection of student feedback from master's degree studies

Teachers are encouraged to give feedback on feedback to the students. There are various methods for handling feedback between teaching staff and students on different levels within the faculties. There are also informal channels by which the feedback is collected constantly, e.g.

discussions with the Student Union, subject associations, and the faculties' advisory boards consisting of discipline-specific stakeholders.

In doctoral training, the doctoral researchers are requested to give feedback on teaching on individual courses, during annual follow-up, in UTUGS satisfaction surveys, and three years after completing the doctoral degree (National Doctoral Degree Career Monitoring).

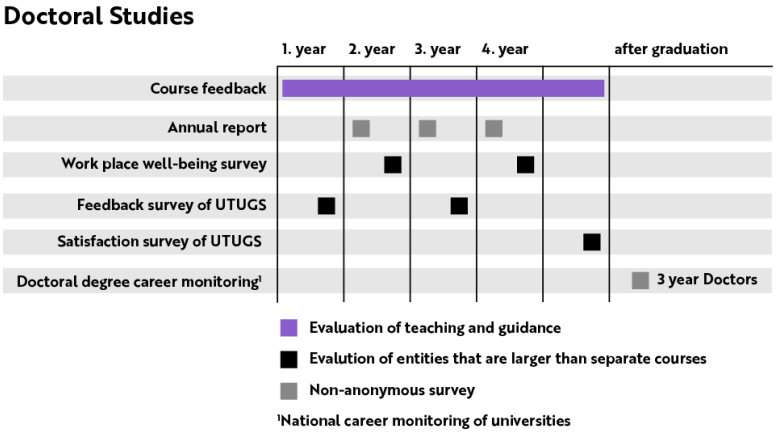

Figure 6. Collection of student feedback from doctoral studies

The data provided by the feedback system is analysed in the centralised support services of the Educational Affairs, in units and working groups as well as in UTUGS. Feedback data is used in the development of education and teaching. There are webinars and targeted presentations in various forums about the given feedback. Reports are used in the assessment of curricula and curriculum planning process. UTUGS has done several development projects based on the received feedback such as adding courses related to transferable skills.

The feedback that is collected from recent graduates through the career monitoring surveys (in Aarresaari network) is used to develop the overall quality of the education, but also to create tools and information in order to help current students and doctoral researchers in their career and working life planning (see e.g. toissa.fi portal). The results of the career monitoring surveys are presented at the Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland portal.

Evaluation process of degree programmes

The UTU Management Group regularly follows and evaluates the number of degrees completed in the faculties and the results are reported to the UTU Board.

The Teaching and Learning Council led by the Vice Rector responsible for education conducts a self-evaluation every two years for all 1st and 2nd degree programmes within UTU, including the international degree programmes. After the self-evaluation process, the Teaching and Learning Council discusses it on a general level. The in-depth discussions and analyses on the self-evaluation of the degree programmes are had on the faculty level. The faculties are encouraged to collaborate in order to cross-share and enhance the development of their programmes based on the results.

The Rector decides on the doctoral programmes and the number of funded positions for each DP based on the proposal of UTUGS. The proposal is based on an evaluation made by two panels of experienced professors from other Finnish universities. UTUGS was evaluated in the last research assessment exercise.

The University of Turku Regulation on Studies (chapter 2.5.) defines the responsibilities of the different actors in the quality work of education and teaching.

Changing needs of society and working life

Considering the changing needs of society and working life is an essential part of the curriculum planning. The faculties have many connections to society and they have ongoing discussions with different stakeholders. In every faculty, the stakeholders take part in one way or another in curriculum planning. Some labour unions carry out surveys for graduates in co-operation with universities.

Continuous learning is part of the education in the entire university as well as of all the study opportunities and services other than degree studies. The emphasis of continuous learning is on changing working life, arising needs for expertise, and learning during the career. Continuous learning also concerns work ability, education, well-being, involvement in society, and work transition.

After graduation, there is a unique opportunity for the UTU alumni to supplement their degree: everyone has a right to study for free for two years after graduation.

UTU provides extensive open university education (for a regulated low fee) and the faculties provide field-specific continuing education opportunities.

Role of support services

The Educational Affairs unit is administratively centralised but physically decentralised. The idea behind partial decentralisation is that the support services of education are located close to the students and the units that provide education. The organisational structure and functions are likewise based on the processes of education.

The unit is constantly developing since both the national educational policy in Finland and the UTU strategy are ambitious and set high expectations on the work of the educational services. For example, educational services for teachers offers constant digi-pedagogical support to teachers by providing self-learning materials and staff training as well as a team supporting the development of MOOCs which was only recently established. Another theme that is currently evolving is the guidelines for open access policy and practice in teaching and learning, as steered by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies.

Moreover, the unit conducts constant self-evaluation to serve the students and the targets of UTU in the field of education as well as possible. In addition, the organisation and the processes are

regularly subject to a more thorough internal scrutiny, in which the Educational Affairs staff, the students, the teaching staff and UTU management are heard to obtain their opinions and ideas for the development of the work of the Educational Affairs.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
There is a comprehensive and systematic student feedback system at UTU	Developing systematic monitoring mechanisms to follow the completion of courses and students' study progress
Expert support for the students and the educational staff by the staff of educational support service (especially Opetuki team).	UTU strives to continuously improve working life co-operation
Digitalisation of UTUGS (see chapter 1.4)	

1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

- Auditointiryhmän arvio

UTU collects systematically versatile feedback but should provide students feedback on their feedback

The University of Turku has a common and systematic approach to collecting and reflecting feedback on students' needs. The UTU-level feedback systems consist of annual surveys for first-year students, bachelor's and master's students and graduates. The Teaching and Learning Council (TLC) supervises the feedback systems and discusses the results and improvement measures.

Besides these UTU-level feedback mechanisms, faculties and units have their own feedback surveys. At the faculty level, the teaching development teams have an important role in monitoring the achievement of learning outcomes and the quality of degree programmes. Direct student-teacher interaction, formal as well as informal, is also an essential part of the University's feedback culture. The audit interviews highlighted many positive examples of using feedback to improve the quality of education and related services.

The Student Union is involved in the feedback system by participating in the TLC. They can also discuss overarching management questions directly with the Rectorate, such as the impact of the cost-cutting programme on the Pori and Rauma campuses and their students, thus ensuring students' needs are considered.

Based on teaching staff interviews, the staff aims to respond quickly to student feedback. Teachers often discuss student feedback with each other and in development discussions with their supervisors. However, students stated that teachers vary widely in how they informed

students about changes made in response to feedback. Based on the audit interviews, this is partly related to teachers' autonomy and partly to the fact that feedback-on-feedback is not part of the feedback system. There is also a systematic issue with the low response rates of course feedback questionnaires. The audit team recommends a more systematic approach to give feedback-on-feedback, especially on measures taken due to the previous year's feedback. In addition, feedback and its utilisation should be better communicated to students.

As for the implementation of the quality management system in education, the University of Turku has the necessary structures in place but is still in the process of fully embracing quality management in teaching and learning.

There is a new quality instrument being introduced, namely the self-evaluation of study programmes. The TLC will conduct them every two years for all first and second-cycle degree programmes within UTU, which is a promising step towards a more comprehensive quality system. The audit team recommends that the University further develop and utilise the self-evaluation of study programmes in systematically monitoring and developing programmes.

UTU should ensure equal influencing possibilities for all students

Despite good communication between the Student Union and the University and faculty-level management, three specific student groups need further attention regarding equal influencing possibilities: continuous learning students, international students and doctoral researchers.

As continuous learning and Open University, students are not full-time and have diverse backgrounds. They have no representation in UTU bodies and interaction with existing structures such as the Student Union. Therefore, the University of Turku and the Student Union should consider integrating them more than they have so far.

Furthermore, better integration of international students into the UTU community is a challenge identified by all actors. Examples of good practices highlighted during the audit visit include welcoming and other social events, mixed groups, joint assignments, onboarding buddies and student tutors. There is also a special Student Union Board member for internationalisation, but no international students have been represented in the Student Union since the pandemic. According to interviews, involving international students in decision-making is difficult due to language issues. Furthermore, exchange students often have little or no contact with Finnish degree students. The University of Turku is recommended to emphasise integrating international students into the UTU community and Finnish society.

Doctoral researchers have their main representation in the UTUGS Management Team, but their group identity seems not yet concluded. While doctoral researchers are significant in university life, goals and general research are often overlooked. By starting a university-wide discussion about their role in the organisation and which kind of representation would fit their status group, UTU could get valuable ideas for further organisational development.

The needs of staff and students are considered in the development of support services

Based on the interview with UTU services representatives, the services work closely with teachers and students and continuously gather feedback to improve their offerings to support the University of Turku management, staff and students in their work and studies. The audit team also welcomes the fact that services cooperate.

The audit visit showed that, for example, career services have focused on career support for students, but now there is also a focus on career support for teachers. The library supports both undergraduate and postgraduate students by offering literature courses. The Communication Unit supports students in making a difference in their studies and communicates with potential applicants, future employers, and the public about UTU provisions and activities. Digital Services promote the development of education management and database systems. All services recognised their role in promoting UTU’s strategy.