1.1 The planning of education

- Högskolans självvärdering

Strategic guidelines steer the planning of education

The responsibilities for education are defined in the Regulations of the UO and the UO Education Regulations. The Education Council supports the rectorate in promoting education. It also initiates motions for education policy and development and evaluates the quality of education. The Education Management Group supports the Vice Rector for Education and the Education Deans in the management and development of education and the implementation of the education strategy. Education actors and their responsibilities are also described in the Quality Handbook.

The planning, delivery and development of education are guided by the strategy of the UO. MINEDU and the UO have drawn up an agreement on the goals for the university's operations for the years 2021-2024. The regulations governing the planning of education are summarised in the Principles for Curriculum Work. The university's education activities and their development are supported by allocating strategic funding that is in line with the strategic objectives. The degree programme portfolio consists of over 100 programmes.

The education planning processes are carried out in accordance with the Annual Wheel of Education planning tool. The processes are illustrated in the IMS system and the instructions for planning of education can be found on the Patio intranet platform.

Process, responsibilities, and schedule for education planning

The Programme Director, in collaboration with Degree Programme Committee, prepare degree structures and the Education Dean approves the final curricula. In the case of doctoral education,

the Annual Wheel of Education is followed with the support of the graduate school. The acceptance of the curricula is divided between the Vice Rector for Education, who handles the general parts, and the Chairperson of the Doctoral Programme Committee, who approves the other parts. Degree descriptions, programme structures and timing plans with course descriptions and implementation information are prepared in the [Peppi system](#) in Finnish and English and published in the [Study Guide](#).

Through continuous learning, the UO enables everyone to develop their skills and competences at any stage of their career and supports the competitiveness of companies and Finland. Continuous learning is planned in connection with the curriculum work in degree programmes. The Programme Director prepares this in collaboration with Degree Programme Committees, and finally the Education Dean decides which courses are carried out as open university studies or as continuing education. The continuous learning curriculum is compiled and published on the [JOY—University of Continuous Learning platform (Jatkuvan Oppimisen Yliopisto)](#). The JOY brand has been helpful in bringing together diverse types of continuous learning and making it more visible and marketable.

Month	Event
February	The Board of Directors decides the degree programme portfolio, e.g. degree programmes, applying options, number of study places, major and specialisation subjects.
April	The Vice Rector of Education decides on the admission criteria of degree programmes.
August	The Programme director, together with the Education Designer, prepares (updates) the programme description in Peppi.
September	The Lead Specialist publishes the programme description in Studyinfo.
October	The Programme director, together with the Education Desginer, prepares (updates) the curriculum structure and timing plan in Peppi.
November	The Education Dean approves the curricula and decides on the offer of continuous learning and the courses implemented as educational cooperation.
December	The Programme director appoints the persons in charge of the courses.
January	The person in charge of the course prepares (updates) the course and implementation descriptions in Peppi.
	The first joint application of the spring.
February	The study guide is published.
	The person in charge of the course submits the timetable information to the Academic Affairs.
March	Academic Affairs prepares the autumn term timetable information in Peppi and reserves the lecture halls. The timetable for the autumn term is published.
	The second joint application of the spring.
May-July	Admission results of joint application to higher education are published.
June	Teaching and research staff prepares a work plan with the line manager.
August	New students accept a study place and register at the university.
	Registration for course implementations and exams begins.
October	Academic Affairs prepares the spring term timetable information in Peppi and reserves the lecture halls. The timetable for the spring term is published.

Figure 5. The process, responsibilities and schedule for education planning.

How could we develop the planning on education?

Development in the functioning of the education procedures requires that Programme Directors should resource more working hours for managing and developing the programme. The awareness of key indicators and results among the Programme Directors could still be improved. A challenge in this respect has been the need to rebuild the reporting system since the introduction of a new information system for education. The university's study guide consists of more than 300 different curricula, and hundreds of people produce content for it. For planning the curriculum and publishing all of it on schedule, stronger support from the leaders of the university and faculties as well as line managers would be needed.

The UO has organised self-assessments that focus on how the university's strategic goals and national educational goals are realised in the degree programmes. According to the results of the latest self-assessment in 2022, 95% of respondents felt that the competence produced by the degrees matched the levels of competence set in the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules.

Intended learning outcomes are drawn up for all degrees and courses. Programme Directors ensure that the learning outcomes of the courses are met, there are no unnecessary overlaps of learning outcomes or contents between courses, and that versatile teaching and assessment methods are used. There is still room for improvement in adding general skills to courses. According to the Finnish Bachelor's Graduate Survey 2022, students gave the weakest ratings for theme "Transferable skills", in particular entrepreneurial competencies were evaluated to have developed only a little during the studies.

During curriculum development and evaluation, it is monitored that all degrees are evenly loaded (30 credits per semester). Student feedback gives information about the true workload of courses in relation to the credits and this is used to fine-tune course workloads.

The Council for External Relations promotes the university's innovation activities, entrepreneurship, research and project cooperation, working life connections, external communication, alumni relations and fund-raising. From the Council, degree programmes receive up-to-date information for planning and developing education and improving working life connections. Workshops are organised with companies to evaluate the contents of degree programmes. Active communication with stakeholders is supported by key account management and CRM. However, there still is great variation in the participation of partners from working life in curriculum work between different degree programmes. The participation of external stakeholders in the planning of degree programmes should be wider and more systematic.

Students have representatives in Degree Programme Committees, Faculty Education Committees and Doctoral Programme Committees. Student (and doctoral researcher) feedback is used for the planning and development of education. Degree programmes communicate actively with the boards of student guilds and organise annual feedback events. Currently, student participation

varies: student participation in the curriculum planning process depends on how actively students are informed and encouraged to participate. The follow-up of how students' suggestions are implemented in curriculum planning is not systematic.

Internationalisation in the planning of education is described in chapter 4.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
The curriculum process is rigorous and well-documented.	Some roles and responsibilities need to be defined more clearly in the regulations. The processes of planning continuous learning should be more clearly integrated in the instructions for planning education, and needs-based planning should be strengthened.
Planning of language and communication studies, cross-institutional studies, minor subject studies, summer studies, and open university studies is included in the process of degree programme curriculum planning.	The involvement of external stakeholders in the planning of education could be more systematic.
Development of the continuous learning brand (JOY) and the active collaboration between continuous learning services, the open university and external stakeholders.	Sufficient resources need to be assigned to the development of education, in particular with increasing cross-institutional studies.
Strengthening entrepreneurial spirit, working life cooperation and the culture of curiosity as a strategic development area.	The procedures of the faculties and degree programmes sometimes differ even though there are common instructions.

1.1 The planning of education

- Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

Educational planning and provision are clearly linked to the strategy of the University of Oulu

At the University of Oulu (UO), the degree programmes and educational provision are well linked to the university's strategy. The UO has six strategic development programmes, one of which is specifically focused on quality education. The strategic programme for educational development "Noste" aims to ensure and improve the competitiveness of education at the university. Launched in 2022, the Noste programme is focused on seven strategic themes, including digitalisation, well-being, continuous learning, and internationalisation. Based on challenges identified by the university, Noste offers a selection of development actions for faculties and degree programmes to select from and adjust to the faculty's profile.

Intended learning outcomes are drawn up for all degrees and courses. The Principles for Curriculum Work provide guidance and support for Education Deans, Programme Directors, and teachers. The UO has a clear process for educational planning supported by the Annual Wheel of Education Planning tool, where Programme Directors have a leading role. In the audit interviews it was stressed that even though the responsibilities of the Programme Directors are described in a formal manner, more attention could be given to the details of Programme Directors' responsibilities and how much time they need to spend for the planning process. The audit team

agrees with the self-assessment report's notion that it is important for the Programme Directors to have enough working hours and support to be successful in their role.

Good examples of curriculum practices emerged during the audit visit, where learning outcomes are systematically defined following accreditation principles (AACSB) or using specific curriculum tools (LOOOP). According to the teacher workshop, these procedures vary between faculties. It was also brought up in the workshop that constructive alignment is not always achieved in all programmes, i.e., intended learning outcomes and received competences are not always connected. Learning outcomes are specified in the course and programme descriptions as required, but the constructive alignment is not always achieved between them. Some degree programmes monitor what students have learned, while others leave it up to the individual teachers. Programme-level curriculum mapping is a current practice within many study programmes. In the workshop during the audit visit some teachers described the curriculum tool LOOOP as difficult and time-consuming to use.

Students' workload is defined according to the principles of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). Clear guidelines are provided in the Principles for Curriculum work. A university-wide effort was made 10-15 years ago to systematically define and ensure that the workload meets the ECTS principles. In 2013, the University of Oulu was awarded the ECTS Label as the first research university in Finland. This effort has since been followed up by providing staff workshops. Students are aware of the workload and ECTS. According to the audit visit, students feel that their workload is relatively balanced throughout their studies.

According to the university's regular self-assessments that focus on the university's strategic and national goals, the educational provision is well aligned with both the university's strategic goals and the competences set by the National Framework for Qualifications. According to the self-assessment report, the university has systematic procedures for approving the plans for degree programmes or other study entities. At the time of the audit visit, an updated strategy for the University of Oulu was underway. According to the interviews, the current strategy contains many objectives and measures related to educational provision, from which the faculties choose the most strategically important ones.

Internationalisation and continuous learning should be better integrated into the planning of education

During the audit visit, internationalisation was discussed from various angles. International opportunities for students are seen as important and considered, but not systematically carried out. This was considered by interviewees as an area for improvement. Students with international experience were quite satisfied with the procedures of their exchange and the educational experience. Students in the workshop complained about lack of information and encouragement to study abroad. Examples of internationalisation at home (I@H) were mentioned during the audit visit, while some students claimed that in practice, there was no chance or mobility window for international exchange in some degree programmes. The internationalisation of degree programme curricula and the student experience were selected by the University of Oulu as

evaluation area IV, further described in chapter 4.

Continuous learning is planned in connection with curriculum work in the degree programmes and published on the university of continuous learning platform JOY. Continuous learning students in the student workshop were satisfied with their experience. Open university students were happy to participate in the same courses as other university students. However, the relationship between JOY and other educational programmes was not very visible to the audit team. In the teacher workshops concerns were raised regarding continuous learning students finding it difficult to participate in scheduled group work due to their work commitments. More flexibility in schedules and modes of teaching (online/hybrid) is needed.

Stakeholder and student involvement in the planning of education is clearly visible

At the UO, educational provision is planned in cooperation with the relevant labour market stakeholders. External stakeholders' collaboration in teaching and curriculum planning is organised within many faculties and through stakeholder meetings. Many degree programmes have strong links to the industry or cultural institutions via student projects, internships, practical courses, and work-placed learning. According to the student workshop, these activities are appreciated by the students.

Several examples of successful interaction with external stakeholders were provided during the audit visit such as advisory boards, faculty councils, specific workshops for external stakeholders, external councils in focus areas, and gathering feedback from the labour market. During the interviews, external stakeholders explained how the needs of enterprises and industry are discussed and listened to by the university and reacted upon. According to the audit visit, external collaboration in educational planning is a well spread procedure within the faculties. Based on these examples of good practices, the audit team recommends the university to ensure that such practices are more systematically implemented across faculties and areas of educational provision.

Student participation in the planning of education takes place in various ways. The Student Union (OYY) is strong and has more than 150 student representatives on various committees, often representing one third of the committee members. The audit team found that the Student Union and student representatives are strongly committed to the development of the university's activities. Students can also apply to work in different working groups and administrations as student representatives in administration ("halloped"). According to the student workshops, the students' voice should be listened to more and resources should be directed towards improvements suggested by students.

As a research university, teaching at the UO is based on high quality research, and researchers have a teaching role as well. According to the audit visit, critical thinking and research competences are important to teach to all students. The aim is to teach competences for the future, not just the competences that are needed in the labour market today. Some students work in research groups and write their first research articles during their studies. During the

audit visit and in the self-assessment report, the audit team was presented with a good example of how research is integrated into teaching: the Chaperone programme, where young post-docs and PhDs present their research for new students. Different Hackathons, where students can innovate new ideas, are also an example of good practise.

Interdisciplinary opportunities appreciated by students

Students during the audit visit expressed that they appreciated the opportunity to take courses from different disciplinary fields and specialise in topics within the programme. They also gave examples of opportunities to work across disciplinary fields on research projects. These opportunities reflect the exceptionally multidisciplinary research culture of the university. Interdisciplinarity adds value to the student experience and strengthens student relationships between programmes, the university community, and stakeholders. At the UO, students have concrete opportunities to combine studies from different faculties and to work on joint projects with students from different disciplines.

The UO and the Oulu University of Applied Sciences have a shared campus and support services. According to the student workshop, the UO students would like to have more cooperation with students from the University of Applied Sciences. So far, the cooperation has been almost invisible for the students.