1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

The Student's Opinion Is Important

In the autumn of 2020, the old e-form based course feedback system was replaced with a new [feedback system](#) (Spark feedback service). The new system is integrated into the newly adopted student management system Peppi. The advantage of the new system is that those courses we wish the students to give feedback on are visible on the student's desktop. The student's final feedback and the teacher's feedback-on-feedback are already in use. From the beginning of the next year new features, continuous feedback and intermediate feedback, will be adopted. Of all these features, each teacher can tailor the best combination for her/his purposes. We believe that the new system will motivate the students to give more feedback because having given feedback the student will see how the other students have evaluated the course and the teacher's feedback-on feedback.

In addition to the national AVOP Graduand Feedback Questionnaire and the career monitoring survey, we also do the Radar survey every year, the results of which are compiled on the UAS level but also for each unit, degree programme and group. The tutor teachers receive a summary of the results of their respective groups and they are instructed to go through them with the group. Feedback is also received through the Feedy system, which is a feedback and initiative channel for all, student and staff. Feedback can be given through Feedy anonymously, but all those who give their contact information will be replied personally. We also encourage the students to contact our personnel directly. The informal relations between the teachers and the students enable the direct feedback.

Students' Success a Strategic Area for Development

The success of students has been included as one strategic area for development at VAMK. The achievement of the objectives set for the degree programmes are evaluated in the Management Team, units, and degree programme meetings, utilising the student feedback mentioned above, indicators of educational activities recorded in the strategy, statistics and feedback from working life. The indicators with which we measure the success of students are degrees taken within the target duration, feedback from the graduands, attraction and the percentage of employed graduates one year after the graduation. The [prizes and honourable mentions](#) received by students also depict the success of students. VAMK students have received prizes for example in [Project Management](#) and in enhancing the management in health care and social services. The majority of our graduates find employment right after the graduation, which is the most important indicator. In future, we will pay special attention to the employment of our international students in the Ostrobothnia region. An indicator for this is under development.

The feedback from working life received by the Management and teaching staff is evaluated and the curricula are reviewed and reformed annually, taking into account the changing need of the society and working life. In continuous learning, we provide single courses or larger modules as open UAS studies. Through working life connections, we hear about needs for further or specialised training. UAS Master's degrees also provide a good path to continuous learning, and we have received good feedback on these programmes from our students. To increase the provision of continuous learning opportunities the President has invited a team of experts to discuss how to enhance our activities in this. In addition, we have recruited more staff and consolidated our competence in the design and coordination of continuous learning.

Digital Support Services

Student services have been enhanced in a student-centred manner by digitalising the most frequently used services as well services that require person-to-person contact. This was implemented by introducing ATOMI, automated student affairs office. The service produces quickly for example e-signed documents that students need for various authorities. The next development phase is the introduction of VALO graduation service, which enables the e-signing of the diploma. The graduation process becomes clearer for students when they can track their application for degree diploma online. In future, the student will receive, in addition to the traditional diploma, an e-signed digital diploma. All new e-services will be integrated into the Peppi service.

For the student, the digitalization of the services means flexible service, and it enables the use of services outside the office hours. The study affairs office still provides person-to-person services according to the situation and the needs of the student. The working hours freed due to the digitalization will be directed to guidance and for person-to-person services to those who have a special need for it. The functioning of support services will be enhanced in cooperation and interactively with the education units. Once a month, the President and the Administrative Director call a meeting to discuss and deal with current issues in the support services.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
Good employment of graduands	Services for students in need of special support
Student feedback services include a possibility for anonymous and immediate feedback	To make feedback a natural part of teaching and learning process
The success of student a strategic area for development	Increasing the impact of course feedback to enhance the education

1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

- Auditointiryhmän arvio

Enhancement of education is based on diverse feedback

Evaluation and further development of VAMK educational provision is based on various channels of feedback as well as institutional data and expert opinions. Important assessment data are derived from regular course feedback, the student Radar Survey and the graduate feedback questionnaire (AVOP), as well as from feedback from the labour market. Furthermore, all degree programmes are evaluated using performance indicators derived from the financial model, audits and self-assessment. The more efficient Radar feedback system concerning teaching methods was introduced in spring 2021 with results being handled in the unit meetings and by the teacher tutors. The audit visit confirmed that the assessment processes as well as the information derived from feedback and surveys continuously enhance teaching and learning and help to provide education that meets the needs of working life.

Students' and graduates' success are strategic areas for institutional development, thus both close cooperation and feedback from working life are essential indicators. Management and teaching staff receive regular feedback from working life through surveys, experts, master's students, and project partners. Recently, VAMK has approached alumni for more feedback on achieved competences and their value for working life. The audit interviews confirmed that in this way, needs for change, amendments or new offers are taken up regularly as well as feedback on the assessment of the curricula and programmes on offer.

In the interview with VAMOK representatives, students described their experiences concerning feedback and discussion on the quality of teaching. They feel that teachers truly engage in building connections with students, and regularly gather student feedback during classes. The auditors also learned that VAMOK feels heard and involved. VAMOK has student representatives in all departments and they discuss feedback with students in different units. They experience that they have a significant influence within VAMK.

Students should be provided with feedback on their feedback

Recently, VAMK has implemented a new system for gathering student feedback on different levels within the institution: Spark for course feedback and the Radar survey for general feedback. The system is quite new, but students are positive about their first experiences with the new system. This system could support VAMK in gathering more structured feedback from students to enhance quality management.

VAMK staff is encouraged to discuss feedback with their students. As the institutional culture is impregnated by a collegial spirit and relations between teachers and students are rather informal, direct feedback is easy to place. A point of development, also indicated by students, is the provision of feedback on feedback. The institution gathers feedback regularly and reacts upon the feedback, but the transparency to students about follow-up actions could be more structured and consistent.

Continuous learning is a strategic development target for VAMK

Continuous learning is offered in different formats and covers training for working life partners as well as competence enhancement for staff, alumni, and students. Furthermore, open UAS studies offer a pathway to apply for bachelor's degree programmes.

VAMK has started several initiatives to foster lifelong learning within the regional working field. Thus, professionals can attend courses of the degree programmes and some programmes also offer additional courses on specific relevant topics. The four main forms of continuous learning include open studies, specialisation studies, in-service education, and preparatory training for immigrants.

The audit interviews indicated that development of lifelong learning is partly based on VAMK teachers' proposals for courses that may be of interest and relevance to stakeholders, and partly on specific requests from companies. The auditors encourage VAMK to further develop different forms of continuous learning on a more systematic basis and follow periodic needs analyses as well as predictive market trends analyses; thus, VAMK can react systematically and timely to learning needs in the region.