KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF HÄME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Författare **Eva Werner, Mia Brzakovic, Henrik Dindas, Kaisa Lähteenmäki-Smith, Marja-Liisa Saarilammi & Karl Holm. Self-assessment of Häme University of Applied Sciences (ed.) Lotta Linko**

Publikationsår **2022**, NCU:s publikation **17:2022**
Språk **Engelska**
ISBN **978-952-206-682-4 pdf**

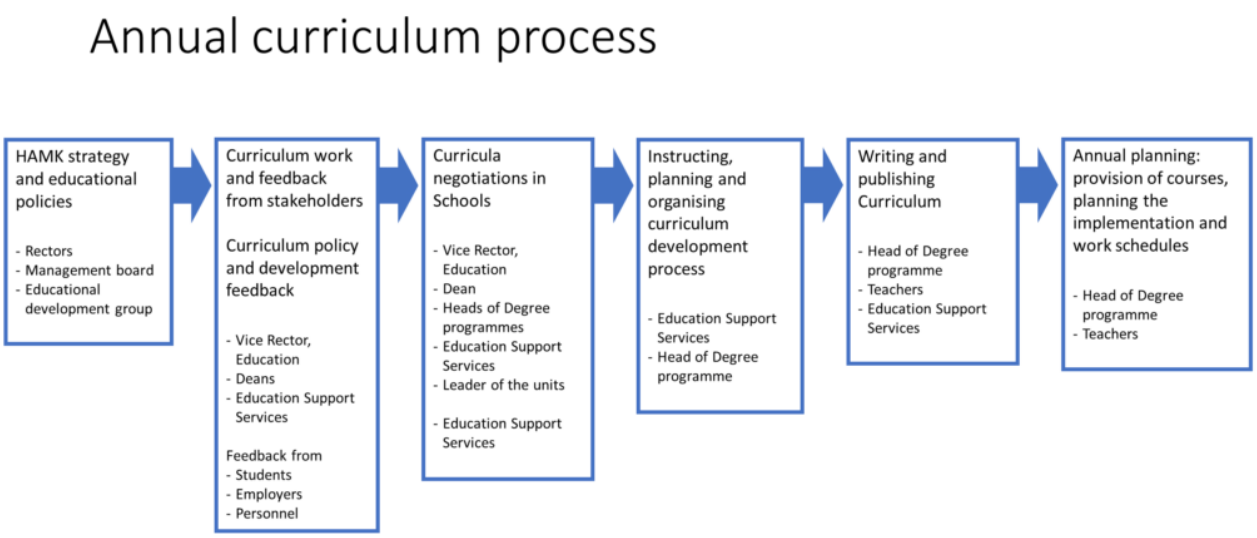
1.1 The planning of education

- Högskolans självvärdering

The curriculum work implements the strategy and defines the learning objectives

The planning of degree and professional teacher education offer is based on the strategy, the operating licence, the performance agreements between HAMK and MoEC, and profiling of education. The Degree regulations outline the planning of education and provision of courses. The curriculum process ensures that the education is linked to the strategy and renewed, is relevant in the labour market, and the key competences are accumulated. Feedback from students and employers and the previous implementations affect curriculum work.

The process examines the objectives of the degrees, the description of the professional field, the module structure and the competence objectives. National competence requirements and the levels of NQF are considered. The student's workload is dimensioned according to the principles of the ECTS – a challenge during the pandemic. The process is documented in the teaching resource planning system.



Freedom of choices support the student-oriented approach

Students are offered three different study methods. The **8–16 day studies** progress on a regular schedule with guidance and their own study group. The **18-100 part-time studies** serve those studying alongside work, mainly online, under guidance, as a part of a team and independently. The **24/7 accelerated studies** are suitable those with competences related to the degree and independent study skills. The study methods also serve the needs of continuous learning in a flexible manner. Students have space to make individual study choices from HAMK's offering and cross-curriculum study networks.

The methods 8–16 and 18–100 are already established in completion of entire degrees. In the 18–100 method, the number of online degrees has increased in recent years. The 24/7 method is implemented in most programmes for parts of the degrees. The aim during the predominantly distance learning in the pandemic has been to maintain the models as original.

Continuous dialogue involves stakeholders in the development of education

Employers participate in developing the contents of education via module projects, ensuring that the students' competences and the employers' needs correspond. The module model has already increased the participation of employers in the development of education. At least every three years, representatives of employers audit the content and impact of sample modules.

Students participate through representation in HAMK's management group and development groups, and through diverse feedback procedures. The national Graduand feedback questionnaire and Career monitoring survey provide information for assessing the relevance for labour market and supporting the curriculum development. HAMK recognises the need to create opportunities

for students to more active, creative participation and a more customer-oriented role in the development of services.

The structures of continuous learning services are renewed

The needs of continuous learning are considered in connection with the curriculum work: the structures are developed so that parts of modules or entire modules can also be offered as services for non-degree students. The offer of continuous learning education has been organised under the HAMK Up brand offering open higher education studies, specialisation studies and made-to-order education. HAMK also owns Häme Summer University with university studies and continuing education. The offer is built based on the feedback from participants and employers, with RDI processes, and by monitoring and analysing educational policies.

Employment, education and RDI activities meet

The integration of RDI and education renews the contents of education. **Module projects'** topics are based on workplace assignments related to the learning targets, and the project structure supports learning and problem-solving. Working in a module project requires students and teachers to have a research-oriented attitude. **Theses** solve workplace commissions a targeted manner and are conducted as development projects at work or in connection with research unit projects.

HAMK 's operating models aim at strengthening the link between the students and the employers, and students' capabilities for RDI activities and entrepreneurship. The pedagogy and methods of entrepreneurial activities are applied in the **Entrepreneurial University** operating model that will be available to all degree students. HAMK **Design Factory** (DF) is an operational environment enabling programmes to practise multi-disciplinary, experimental innovation activities. The DF addresses problems and challenges presented by companies and other actors. HAMK recognises the importance of supporting workplaces in student project work.

The same **RDI and learning environments** brings RDI, projects and education together. Teachers can participate in RDI projects to develop and renew their competences and teaching. The researchers participate in teaching and supervise thesis work. A significant proportion of those working in HAMK's research units regularly work in education tasks. Students' participation in RDI projects is increasing.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
The curriculum process is well established, supporting the planning of education and ensuring strategic perspectives are accounted for.	There are differences in the planning of students' workload, especially in the Covid pandemic period.
The student has many possibilities to participate in RDI activities. RDI in module projects, in particular, have been established as a good operating model.	The smooth movement of personnel between research units and schools in their work tasks still requires improvements in practical solutions.

Choice offered to the student by the three study methods.	Connections to employers in education are partly dependent on personal connections. Alumni participation in planning of education could be developed. Cooperation between continuous learning and degree education must be continued.

1.1 The planning of education

- Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

Student-centred and workplace-oriented approach is an essential feature for HAMK

The institutional strategy (HAMK Strategy 2030) is deeply rooted in HAMK's (Häme University of Applied Sciences) vision to be the most inspiring and the most workplace -oriented higher education institution in Finland, that is committed to its international and national partnerships. The self-evaluation report and the interviews provided evidence that everyone is willing to do their best in realising this vision, and that there is a clear focus on utilising the possibilities offered by technology in improving the quality and performance of education.

The strategy considers the conformity of the qualification goals with the National qualification framework and the compliance with legal requirements, in particular the state-specific structural requirements. The audit team was able to ascertain that the quality assurance measures were developed after thorough preliminary clarifications and in-depth consultations, and they are therefore well accepted and supported among all staff throughout the higher education institution. One of the quality benchmarks concerns the competence orientation of the study programmes, which are based on action-oriented learning objectives and competence-oriented forms of examination.

HAMK is strongly linked to the regional working life field through close project-partnerships and networks and is thus well equipped to educate a qualified workforce for the future, taking future skills into account. An essential aspect is the participation and the conscious bringing together of all status groups, which was confirmed in the interviews as teachers and business life have continuous discussions on this matter. This has led to a consequent inclusion of stakeholders from the business field into the development processes and resulted into steady input and feedback for HAMK.

The strong co-operation in research, teaching and administration aims to expand services by joining forces and involving external partners in the monitoring processes. Education offers at HAMK are planned, designed and evaluated in cooperation with partners from working life, for

example through the advisory committees and to some extent alumni feedback. HAMK has an informal approach to alumni for more feedback on achieved competences and their value for working life, especially through feedback from graduates on education or Design Factory projects (in Chapter 4 introduces the Design Factory). Nevertheless, the systematic inclusion of alumni feedback could be improved. In the interviews, it became clear that the cooperation with alumni can still be expanded and their input used more consistently for the planning education.

Development and planning cycles are clearly defined and assure up-to-date learning outcomes

The planning of education and degree programmes is based on clear development and planning cycles and, from the auditors' point of view, guarantees the implementation of qualification goals and intended learning outcomes of degree programmes. It also assures that programmes are studiable and both intended qualification level and qualification profile are achieved. The decision-making processes, competencies and responsibilities in the management system for teaching and learning are largely defined.

HAMK is planning its degree programmes and other provision with clearly defined learning outcomes and in accordance with assessing the relevance for the future labour market. In accordance with the Degree regulations, the regular internal evaluation of the study programmes takes place by means of an annual curriculum planning process. The starting point of this process at HAMK is the annual curriculum process, focusing on the strategy, the operating licence, the performance agreements between HAMK and Ministry of Education, and profiling of education. The systematic curriculum process ensures that the education is linked to the strategy and regularly reviewed and renewed; furthermore, this process ensures that education is relevant for the labour market, and the key competences are accumulated. Through the interviews, it has become clear to the audit group that HAMK's curriculum work was developed systematically with the aim of continuously improving the quality of HAMK's study programmes.

One good example of this is systematic development from previously fragmented curricula to a more integrative curricula with common planning of the modules through teaching staff. Hence, the process for planning is systematic, comprehensive and diligent because it incorporates feedback and data from various perspectives and stakeholders as well as research. The development process and the renewal process integrate input from staff and students as well as external stakeholders, such as alumni, external partners, and working life.

The concrete sequence of the development of qualification goals, as well as development and planning of study programmes based on internal and external requirements are coherent. Development of the study programmes involves both theoretical and professional expertise. If necessary, referral of the study programme concept, or changes to an existing study programme, are implemented. RDI and projects with regional partners, staff and students are also sources for input into education. This ensures that a certain topic is looked at from various points of view. The process is documented in the teaching resource planning system. Based on the reviewed study programmes, the audit group was able to gain a comprehensive picture of this system.

Students' learning experiences inside and outside the campus

HAMK has made substantial efforts to bringing learning environments, RDI projects and education together. The facilities at HAMK (e.g., labs) are a great resource for real world learning experiences. This concept of gaining ideas on what working life will be like in the future is also evident in summative and formative assessments. The Design Factory especially offers many opportunities to practice experimental activities for students. The progress of students is also well monitored by means of data use, i.e., Peppi, Solemove-system. With an international focus, the RUN-EU alliance will offer more than 60 international courses available for HAMK students.

Nevertheless, the audit team learned from the interviews that students' learning experiences as well as work placement and internship opportunities, are somehow uneven regarding international (incoming) students. The interviews underlined that the opportunities for international students are limited to jobs where minimal to no Finnish language skills are required. It was also mentioned that international students and Finnish students do not often do things together on or off campus, because international students might group within their own nationalities as well as within the international groups. This disconnect has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. HAMK should take care of providing equal learning and research experiences for all students – domestic and international – in all programmes, and formats.

In the student workshop it was also reported that not all materials of the international offers are always available in English and up to date; and students feel that some of the teachers should have better language skills for teaching international students. It is recommended to extend and improve the related services and to pay close attention to capture international students' needs. Here, HAMK has already initiated a pilot project focusing on this particular student group through mandatory language courses and special events. The audit team encourages HAMK to continue these efforts and provide an international environment for all students.

Curriculum design and enhancement processes foster flexibility and renewal of study design

As part of the curriculum drafting, the assessment criteria, assessment formats, pedagogical methods and learning environments are aligned to the intended learning outcomes. This includes realistic assessment and review of student workload, application of ECTS, appropriate modularisation, adequate examination organisation, advising and counselling services, consideration of gender equity and the special needs of students. At HAMK, the education is planned in accordance with the European Qualification Framework, as well as with the National Framework for Qualifications and other Competence Modules. Feedback stemming from course evaluations or feedback from the students' representatives, e.g., as to workload, is also considered in the planning of educational programmes. In the interviews, the strong involvement of students in the programme development cycle was confirmed.

Student representatives explicitly expressed HAMK's flexibility in the curriculum development and renewal process and the student's role, because objectives are set by everybody in the

HAMK community, including students. The strong voice of students creates a motivating atmosphere for studying at HAMK. In the interviews, the reforming of the curricula in 2020 was very positively acknowledged because it focused on better serving the customers' needs. This flexibility is facilitated through various study methods and formats, ECTS credit transfer and recognition of prior learning, as well as by institutional support for learning and learning progress.

The concept of the study formats (8-16 day, 18-100 part-time and 24/7 accelerated studies) gives students the opportunity to choose the location of where to study as well as when they want to study, catering to the life-circumstances needs of various groups of students. However, it was noted in the interviews that the workload, especially for assignments, is not always well distributed. Thus, HAMK should redirect attention to the design and form of assignments, comparing the three different study formats and using student feedback, so that courses with comparable objectives and content ensure a balanced workload. In the interviews with the students, it became clear that especially assignments in a mixed group do not fit into every study method. The audit group recommends to critically reflect this issue and make necessary adaptations so that course format, study method and workload distribution go well together.