

# AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND

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## 1.1 The planning of education

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

### Managing education

The university's educational management which UEF's Academic Rector is responsible for, supports the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of strategic objectives. The university has a Council for Teaching and Guidance in accordance with the University Regulations for supporting the management of education. The faculties' designated deputy deans are responsible for education, together with the deputy heads of departments and divisions of education. The persons responsible for education form a network of pedagogical leaders which develop and share good practices of teaching. Students are represented in the Council for Teaching and Guidance, and in faculty/departmental/unit-specific teaching development groups.

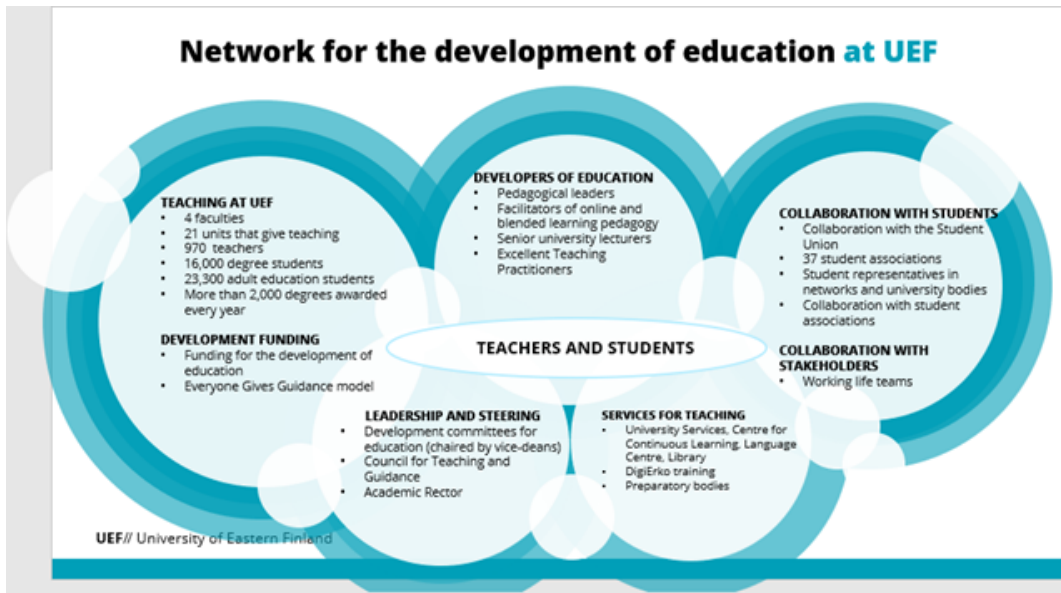


Figure 5 Network for the development of education at UEF

The Education Leadership and Development Network organises webinars and other events on education development topics to engage teachers and students in jointly planning, evaluating, and implementing development measures. The network also supports the dissemination of good practices.

## Curriculum work, relevance to working life, and continuous learning

The university's degree structures and curricula are based on the national frameworks and laws of each field. The Council of Teaching and Guidance prepares guidelines for curriculum work which are approved by the Academic Rector. The guidelines of UEF Doctoral School are prepared by the Steering Committee for Research. Curricula are prepared by the faculties/units/departments and are approved by the faculty councils. Staff and students are involved in the preparation and decision-making process. To support curriculum work, UEF organises training sessions for teachers. UEF has also developed a calculator for teachers (ECTS meter) for estimating students' workload. Course surveys ask for feedback on course workloads.

For relevance with working life, stakeholders are consulted in education development, for example through work-life seminars and stakeholders' meetings. This cooperation is deep especially in medicine, pharmacy, and teacher training. In generalist disciplines in the humanities, the [HUMUS project](#) has incorporated cooperation with working life partners on courses, developed internship opportunities, and created principles for cooperation on these.

The curricula include generic, transferable skills to apply substantive skills in new situations and for learning new skills. The Peppi system describes a set of these generic competences, for example digitalisation, ethics, internationalisation, sustainability and responsibility, critical thinking, and interaction and communication for qualifications with common headings. From these sustainability and responsibility themed courses have been included in the curricula. Questions about general competences have been added to the university's student feedback from 2021 onwards for assessing the implementation and effectiveness of the development

activities.

UEF offers a wide range of courses/services to help students learn skills and opportunities for entrepreneurship, and substantive entrepreneurship skills-based elements are included in various fields' curricula. UEF offers a minor subject in entrepreneurship open to all students.

The university has implemented a systemic change in continuous learning, with closer, more streamlined collaboration between the faculties/units and the Centre for Continuous Learning. The curricula for 2022-2025 were prepared in cooperation between the Centre for Continuous Learning, the Language Centre, and the faculties. Forecasting is used systematically and cooperation with working life is modelled as part of a continuous learning approach to strengthen the relevance of education to the world of work.

## Internationalisation is reflected in curricula

The university offers more than twenty international master's programmes and two international bachelor's programmes. The number of international degree programmes is growing. The university's degree programmes offer courses in English, the number of which is constantly increasing, especially at the basic and intermediate levels. Finnish as a second language (S2) is compulsory in all English-language programmes. In addition to the international degree programmes, students can complete a free [minor](#) in internationalisation (25-35 credits). International student exchange is open to all students.

The UEF Trainee internship programme enables students on international master's programmes to undertake paid internships. In autumn 2021, the programme was opened to external companies. The university will assist in recruiting trainees and pay their salary.

The university belongs to the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) alliance, which is an alliance between ten young European research-intensive universities. UEF is a part of YUFE Virtual Campus, which offers academic courses in English and various language courses. UEF is also a part of the European Bioeconomy University (EBU).

## Supporting the development of teaching in a variety of ways

Teaching development has been supported through separate programmes and funding for several developing areas: online and multi-modal pedagogy, innovative teaching methods, cross-institutional study opportunities, and other collaborative teaching, developing lifelong learning products, student guidance and well-being, commissioned education products, and generic skills development.

Chosen teaching methods and learning assessment support the achievement of learning outcomes. The university has systematically developed learning environments and digital pedagogy. The university has provided teacher training for activating and diverse teaching methods, the most significant of which is [Flipped classroom](#) teaching. Support for teachers is extensive and available for all and includes: university pedagogical training, teaching

development projects, seminars on learning environments , online and multi-modal pedagogical facilitators, and a wide range of support services.

The university has hastened the expansion of distance learning/hybrid education and has developed its activities via various pilots. For example, DigiErko training (60 credits) is offered for teachers. The university rewards annually talented teachers who form the Excellent Teaching Practitioner Network, which aims to increase appreciation of, and develop teaching.

Researchers transfer the latest knowledge/methods of research to teaching and almost all researchers teach. The degree programmes are developed based on feedback/statistics on teaching, learning, guidance, and qualifications.

Students can take courses where they can familiarize to do research. The university has an active [doctoral school](#). Doctoral studies include discipline-specific studies based on current research. The doctoral school provides joint training in the philosophy of science and research ethics for all doctoral programmes.

#### **Strengths**

Free minor subjects  
Online and multi-modal pedagogy and facilitators  
Generic competence development process 2021-2023  
A multidisciplinary package of sustainability studies  
UEF - trainee programme  
An effective education management and governance system  
Lecturer in the Philosophy of Science and Research Ethics (Doctoral School)

#### **Enhancement areas**

Systematic use of student feedback in the development of teaching and highlighting the effectiveness of feedback  
Regular assessment and renewal of competence objectives  
Including higher education-related development projects into teachers' work plans in such a way that they don't overburden teachers  
Increasing support for student career planning, including entrepreneurship opportunities

## 1.1 The planning of education

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#### Educational provision is clearly linked to UEF strategy

UEF's degree programmes are clearly linked to the university's strategy. As mentioned in the University's Self-Assessment Report (SAR), the implementation of "modern and renewed learning" is one of the goals of UEF's Strategy 2030. The university strategy has several targets that are related to education. UEF strives to be a learning-centred university and to create student-centred and networked learning environments. As UEF is one of the largest providers of open higher education in Finland, continuous learning and education that anticipates societal

needs is also highlighted as a strategic goal. The same applies to the internationalisation of teaching and learning.

The courses of study, degrees, and other educational provision are planned with clearly defined intended learning outcomes. As mentioned in the SAR as well as during the audit visit, the PEPPI study data system is used to support and guide the definition of learning outcomes. Generic competences, such as digitalisation, ethics, internationalisation, sustainability and responsibility, critical thinking, interaction, and communication, are part of the curriculum. This underlines the high relevance of the education provision for the future workplace or employment.

Numerous institutions and departments of UEF are involved in the design of study programmes. The process seems well coordinated between the different bodies. For example, the Lifelong Learning and Continuous Learning curricula for 2022–2025 were developed in collaboration between the Centre for Continuous Learning, the Language Centre, and the faculties. UEF focuses on research- and evidence-based teaching. In the audit visit, it became clear that research activities are integrated into education in a way that links research-based information to education in a relevant way. The importance of constructively aligning intended learning outcomes, teaching, and learning assessment was emphasised by various university representatives during the audit visit including the teacher's workshop. Flipped learning pedagogy, widely adopted by faculty members, supports student-centred learning, promotes deeper understanding and is in line with the ideas of modern learning.

The faculty councils of UEF approve the curricula, and UEF ensures that degrees and learning outcomes are in line with the national qualifications' framework. Student workload is determined according to the principles of ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). A calculator (ECTS-Meter) is available to the teaching staff to estimate the workload of the students. Feedback on the students' workload is requested in course surveys. During the audit visit, students indicated that they are heard when it comes to the distribution of the workload over the academic year.

There is a clear focus on the needs of the labour market especially in medicine, pharmacy, forest sciences, and teacher training. In the general education subjects of the humanities, the HUMUS project is a good example of UEF's efforts to involve stakeholders in planning teaching and learning.

## Interdisciplinarity, internationalisation and continuous learning should be more integrated into the planning of education

In Strategy 2030, UEF has emphasised the importance of developing competences through interdisciplinary research and teaching. In the audit visit, it was revealed that these aspects are also relevant for the planning of education. It seems that interdisciplinarity is mainly implemented in more advanced degree programmes than the bachelor's degree. The audit team recommends that UEF strengthens the strategic goals of multidisciplinary and excellent research in all educational programmes.

Internationalisation is anchored in the university's strategy and should also be considered in the planning of the degree programmes. At UEF, there is a wide range of international study programmes, especially master's and doctoral programmes, and new international programmes are in preparation. There are also various joint Erasmus Mundus programmes. There is a small sub-project on professional intercultural competence. Programmes like this are relevant for embedding internationalisation in all degree programmes. However, it is not easy to get Finnish students to study abroad anymore and in the past students had more connections to international universities and other countries. UEF should be attentive here. Since UEF belongs to the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) alliance and is also part of the European Bioeconomy University (EBU), the audit team recommends using its international partnership opportunities to integrate internationalisation as well as benchmarking and joint initiatives into the educational provision to enhance internationalisation. In the next phase of curriculum design, all programmes need to include internationalisation issues in the planning of courses for all students.

In the audit visit, it became clear that continuous learning is a central theme at UEF and is considered when planning education. One of the strengths of the university's educational provision is that UEF integrates continuous learners into regular courses and ensures the integration of continuous learners within the university. Every graduate can apply for continuous learner status. The audit team recommends using this approach to strengthen the relationship between UEF and its alumni.

## Stakeholder involvement and student participation should be strengthened in the planning of education

During the audit visit, it was evident that both students and external stakeholders are involved in the planning of education. Students can participate in the development of the current study programmes as well as in the development of new programmes. However, student involvement could be further developed, and the members of the student union reported difficulties in getting students to participate in different committees.

External stakeholders are consulted in the development of study programmes through work-life seminars and stakeholder meetings. This collaboration is particularly intensive in the areas of medicine, pharmacy, and teacher training. The relationship with local stakeholders is close. There is an ongoing process to involve stakeholders in discussions about future labour market needs and to anticipate changes in the UEF environment in both locally and globally. Stakeholders report excellent engagement in creating new programmes, but limited engagement in renewing existing programmes.

The audit team recommends more systematic use of stakeholder expertise to improve study programmes and especially in the renewal of existing programmes. Extensive stakeholder involvement in the planning and operation of existing study programmes would be beneficial for skills development and would help UEF to ensure the relevance of study programmes to working

life. The audit team recommends strengthening the implementation of processes of ongoing reflection on future competency goals.