KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF AALTO UNIVERSITY

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1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

Continuous development and clear responsibilities in the development of education

Aalto University's operating principles, together with its academic policies and regulations, guide the continuous development of education (through the PDCA cycle). The Vice President of Education, Vice Deans of Education, Heads of Departments and Directors of the BSc, MSc and PhD programmes are responsible for the development of education. Doctoral and degree programme committees are responsible for developing the programmes, assuring the quality of teaching and processing the feedback. LESG coordinates joint development projects in education and degree programme portfolio development through the process for preparing a new degree programme. DEWG coordinates the development the university's doctoral education.

Broad collaboration and evaluation activities on different levels

Education and the implementation of the strategy are reviewed annually as part of the University Review process. The review includes material from the schools' and the Learning Steering Group's self-assessments and the analysis of KPIs for education. Practices to evaluate the implementation of the strategic cross-cutting themes (i.e., sustainable solutions, entrepreneurial mindset and radical creativity) need to be developed further.

The schools and programmes carry out annual programme reviews and workshops, including evaluation of the previous academic year. In addition, the degree programmes utilise e.g. course feedback for continuous improvement of every day operations. The process involves knowledge-based development and assessment. Broad-based cooperative planning with teaching and

research staff forms the basis of the development work, which also includes students and other stakeholders. Programme directors ensure the aligned development of teaching withing a programme, and teachers develop courses in close interaction with programme development. Programme-level development actions are agreed upon by the programme committees, where both faculty and students are represented.

Collaboration with student guilds and organisations is an important part of evaluating and developing education at Aalto. This can be seen in the wide presence of student representatives on decision-making boards, steering and management groups, and other co-operative activities at the schools and degree programmes. Student feedback plays an important part in the evaluation of education, including feedback on teaching, learning outcomes, wellbeing, workload, employment and internationalisation.

Doctoral students are asked to answer a follow-up survey annually which includes questions on their doctoral personal study plan (DPSP) covering their course work, supervision, research, career and financial issues. Since supervision is a key quality factor of doctoral education, special attention is paid to the evaluation and development of thesis supervision.

Development needs regarding degree education and continuous learning are collected from stakeholders through advisory boards and events for alumni and partners. Feedback from working life and needs for continuous learning are also channelled through close collaboration with the FITech Network University.

External evaluation processes, such as the Business School's accreditations and extensive teaching and learning evaluation exercises (TEE), provide Aalto with valuable reviews from international specialists.

Supporting the development of a feedback culture

The principles and goal of feedback in education at Aalto are to support the active development not only of our education but also of our feedback culture – to ensure interactive, impactful and streamlined feedback processes. Teachers can use these principles both to support the development of feedback practices in their teaching and when discussing feedback with their students. The ability to actively collect and use student and collegial feedback in developing teaching is also assessed as part of tenure track promotion.

Course development occurs both during and after a course. Student feedback is automatically collected after each course, and teachers are also encouraged to collect valuable feedback regarding their teaching and the students' learning and workload during the course. To underline the significance of the feedback, teachers are asked to clearly communicate development actions based on previous student feedback, as well as providing feedback to students on their learning outcomes. Teachers can also award students additional points for giving feedback since it can be valued as an important working life skill.

The importance of constructive feedback is emphasised in all communications, including ongoing

surveys and communications about previous development activities. This is a central action to develop our feedback culture and feedback skills. Offering feedback to students who reply to surveys is also important. The 'AllWell?' student survey is a good example of successful counter feedback. After replying, students get personal feedback on their strengths, as well as tips regarding their well-being and developing their study skills.

Tools and services to support evaluation and education development

Aalto University's Learning Services use service design and user-centric methods to enhance their activities and services. For example, the development support services or the conceptualisation of new curriculum design and is done with teachers and stakeholders through user (teacher) interviews, organising workshops and benchmarking. Other user-centric methods, such as surveys, feedback questionnaires, participatory observation, reviews and reflections, are also used.

Similar principles are evident in the report tools, which offer data and feedback on teaching and studying to support the continuous evaluation of programmes. The tools were developed based on feedback from programme directors, co-creation workshops and user experience interviews. For example, the results of the student wellbeing survey 'AllWell?' are available in the report tool for degree programmes. The survey was developed to address the needs of students and degree programmes, and it provides valuable information on development needs.

Many development projects concerning teaching and learning services, workflows and tools have been brought together under the heading of Leap for Learning. This includes possibilities to develop new dynamic feedback processes with the help of a service platform. One of its objectives is to renew services and support for the evaluation, development, planning and implementation of education. Services and guidance for students will also be improved when the new online student success hub is launched.

Strengths	**Enhancement areas**
Systematic evaluation of key performance indicators (KPIs) in education as part of the university's review process.	The ways to assess the progress in enhancing the strategic cross-cutting themes (i.e., sustainable solutions, entrepreneurial mindset and radical creativity) in education need to be developed.
Strong tradition of programme reviews and development in the schools.	A university-wide shared template/model and annual clock would greatly benefit and strengthen the programme review's role in the university's annual planning cycle.
Joint data reporting tools are available in Power BI for all degree programmes to evaluate BSc, MSc and PhD programmes.	Criteria and measures for viable programmes need further development.

Triple Crown status (AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS) for education in business is an honour held by only a few business schools worldwide.	More systematic assessment practices need to be developed at the course level.
Students participate in the 'AllWell?' wellbeing survey and receive feedback and tools to enhance their wellbeing based on the results.	When planning development actions, the students' perceived workload and their risk of burnout – currently high– should be carefully noted to avoid further stress.
Leap for Learning supports user-centric service design and modern service development activities.	Ensuring an appropriate balance between development activities and workload.

1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

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Feedback-on-feedback is one of the main improvement areas in education

The university strongly emphasises gathering and utilising student feedback data to continually improve the quality of education and support services offered. Through various channels, such as surveys, focus groups and individual feedback mechanisms, the university systematically collects data on the needs, the progress of studies and the well-being of students. This feedback data is then analysed to make data-driven decisions and improvements to the degree programmes, including curriculum development, teaching methods and student support services.

Based on the interview with education specialists, Aalto is in the process of renewing their course feedback system and developing tools for teachers to give counter-feedback. Teachers have requested more resources for responding to feedback, and the university is taking a positive approach to encourage teachers to participate. The process of renewal and development is being discussed with teachers to ensure a systematic approach. However, at the time of the audit visit, it was not yet clear how the university would ensure whether counter-feedback on course feedback was given. Students reported that giving feedback on feedback depends on teachers. Aalto is recommended to develop more systematic procedures and support for teaching staff to inform students of changes introduced based on student feedback.

Systematic monitoring and evaluation of degree education is up to date and meets the needs of society and working life

Concerning evaluation and development of the overall education portfolio, Aalto's annual strategic University Preview, University Review and University Dialogue processes strongly support agile curriculum development and ensure continuous quality development and updating

of degree programmes. It dynamically links and aligns societal development trends, strategic goals, performance development and priorities over time. The process includes annual self-assessments, reviews, workshops, and analysis of the previous year's performance at the school and programme levels.

In programmes and schools, the deans' interview emphasised that various indicators are followed and data analysed to gauge relevance. This includes employment and employer association statistics, programme review results, student feedback, external stakeholder feedback and intake statistics. There are examples of alumni boards and international advisory boards providing ideas and feedback on relevance to schools and programmes. Input from several audit interviews showed that employees and students saw these processes as very inclusive. They involve systematically analysing plans and indicators, feedback from diverse sources and community discussion at all levels. On the Aalto level, the Learning Steering Group discusses school feedback, including work-life aspects, and analyses new needs that should be considered.

There was convincing evidence that the evaluation data is being used for the revision of existing degree programme structures and contents, specification of learning outcomes in curricula, analysis of how well the intended learning outcomes are achieved, coordination and planning of new programmes and course initiatives, as well as portfolio changes and development of lifewide learning provision. The use of data to gain insight is systematic and diverse, going far beyond the standard institutional KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).

Systematic development of support services is based on the needs of students and staff

Aalto has a well-structured system for developing support services based on the needs of students and staff. They use various methods to gather feedback, such as questionnaires, joint projects, well-being surveys for students and well-being surveys and monthly meetings with schools for staff. The university has also introduced new services and support tools for student well-being based on student feedback or initiatives. These include intensified student career guidance, such as Career Design Lab and a mentoring programme that involves alumni.

Another important initiative is the Leap for Learning project which aims to create a more student-friendly educational experience with the help of a news service platform and a success team to support students. Some challenges include transferring from online to on-site teaching, larger cohort sizes and heterogeneity in background knowledge. Nevertheless, the project employs strategies to tap into intrinsic motivation, involves student project work and provides real-life exposure to build competencies. The project also acknowledges the need to support and integrate Finnish language studies for international students and organise instruction for large courses. Furthermore, the Leap for Learning project has future potential to improve feedback for students from their learning while addressing critical challenges in facilitating student learning and competences.

As for developing staff support services based on feedback, the development and availability of

pedagogical peer support were mentioned as good examples.