KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF AALTO UNIVERSITY

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1.4 The HEI’s examples of successful enhancement activities

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

Encouraging the internationalisation and global competency of students

The diverse community at Aalto offers both exposure to internationalisation and opportunities for day-to-day interaction with students, faculty and staff of over 100 nationalities. Group work design, shared projects and the mixing of different disciplines in a selection of purpose-designed courses encourage the development of global competencies throughout the student population.

At Aalto, we support the development of internationalisation and global competences in many ways, such as:

- including global competences in the curriculum design process by making them visible in learning objectives and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) at both the programme and the course level;
- encouraging students to make use of the student mobility possibilities (exchange studies and internships) that the university offers and making space for exchange studies in the degree structure and timetables;
- promoting a multicultural and diverse learning environment through worldwide student recruitment;
- offering international joint programmes that give students the possibility to study at different partner universities.

At the School of Business, about 75% of students complete an international exchange and/or internship during their studies. To enable this, the School maintains close ties with its international peers. Recently, the School joined the European Common Online Learning (ECOL) network, in which Aalto and several international partners share online courses. This provides an opportunity for an international learning experience even to students who are unable to travel to another country.

The School of Business also focuses on providing a rewarding experience to incoming exchange students. An active and satisfied group of exchange students who are realising their learning goals also benefits Aalto students, who get more international exposure from their peers. Incoming exchange students are supported with comprehensive services, social opportunities and integration activities.

In addition, Aalto has several MSc-level international double degree programmes that give our students the opportunity to complete a master's degree in parallel with their home university master's degree. Moreover, all Aalto MSc students have the opportunity to complete a one-year CEMS Master's in International Management (MIM) programme in parallel with their programme.

Students at the centre of planning their study path

At Aalto, we have further strengthened our student-centred approach by encouraging students to proactively take responsibility for their studies. This is accomplished primarily through study planning: each student is entitled and advised to make personal choices regarding their studies. Students have options regarding the selection of study entities, and courses they have selected may be included in Aalto bachelor's and master's degrees, enabling students to focus on their individual interests. Students are also supported throughout this process by service staff and academic advisors. The university has recently renewed the core student information system, and the new 'Sisu' system is strongly based on a student-driven approach and an operating logic that supports students' planning processes.

Education leadership practices

A recently developed education leadership practice to support the management and development of the education portfolio at Aalto is the preparation process for the degree programmes. The process guides faculty to involve key actors in the discussions and preparations of a new programme initiative as early as possible. As part of the process, new initiatives are presented for discussion and feedback in the LESG. This encourages development ideas to be shared across Aalto schools and educational fields to ensure collaboration.

Since 2021, education leaders, such as degree programme directors and the heads of majors, have been invited to participate in the Educational Leadership Forum. The forum is a joint university-level event held three times a year by the Vice President for Education and the

schools' Vice Deans of Education. Its purpose is to enable discussions of strategic educational development, management and leadership topics, and it supports dialogue between educational leaders at different levels within the university. Since the schools have different education leadership practices and forums for coordinating degree programme development, the joint university-level forum provides a good opportunity for peer support and the sharing of best practices across the schools.

One of the school-specific good practices is the steering groups for the bachelor's and master's programmes at the School of Engineering. These groups consist of the Vice Dean of Education, programme directors and/or heads of majors, planning officers of the programmes and student representatives. Their mission is to coordinate the activities and practices of the degree programmes and to offer education leaders opportunities for peer support and sharing of good practices.

Another good practice is the annual programme development discussions at the School of Science. Programme directors are called to reflect on programme-specific needs with the Vice Dean of Education. The aim is to analyse the results and identify objectives for development activities. In addition to this process, the School of Science has created a role, the department vice head of education, to support programme directors in the challenging task of planning and allocating resources for teaching. This has been recognised as a good practice to support programme directors in the challenging situation where the teaching and courses in a programme are offered by many departments with separate budgets, resources and objectives.

New services to support education leadership practices are being developed in co-operation with HR services and Learning Services. In August 2022, an online coaching for programme directors was piloted, and new onboarding material is under development.

Student engagement in the university's development and core activities

A core value has been the involvement of the community at all levels to ensure that its voice is heard. This requires that there are known, existing channels to bring matters to the attention of management for further consideration. Providing students with a means to participate and develop their home university was addressed in the national bachelor survey of 2013.

From the students' perspective, the university and school bylaws specify decisions-making bodies where students have representatives, such as the academic committees, programme committees and the Aalto management team. Students are also involved in advisory bodies, such as steering groups and service management teams. Their role is essential in ensuring adequate communication and providing the students' perspectives on matters under discussion.

Students select their representatives independently. The number of student members and their substitutes are set in the bylaws. The university annually requests that the student union nominate their representatives to the bodies. The student union organises elections and

nominates their representatives.

In addition to participation through formal avenues, the university and student organisations arrange networking events and other free-form forums for joint discussions and sharing ideas. For example, the student union board regularly meets with members of the management team to discuss topical items. The Vice President of Education and the Learning Services director regularly meet the chairs of student organisation from all fields to hear their insights and get feedback.