KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF METROPOLIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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1.1 The planning of education

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

Education planning guided by strategy

Education planning at Metropolia is guided by the strategic theme of *Lifelong learning*, which covers all degree programmes and other learning solutions (figure 3). Education planning is also guided by pedagogical principles and other strategic themes.

Phenomenon-based learning takes place in innovation hubs. *Sustainable development and growth* guides Metropolia to incorporate the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in all education. The *People and culture* theme supports the Metropolia community on its journey towards an agile learning culture and bold experimentation. *Digitalization* guides the use of digital tools in the development of learning. In education planning, a need for more systematic development has been identified. The degree programmes will draw up development plans by the end of 2022 for the implementation of the pedagogical principles and strategic themes. In addition, the steering group of the Open UAS began operating in the beginning of 2022. HEI-level coordination of preparatory education for specialization students and immigrant students will be launched at the group's initiative in the autumn of 2022.



Figure 3 At Metropolia, all learning is lifelong learning.

The education planning at Metropolia has been consistently taken in a more learner-centric direction (see 1.4). The concept of *lifelong learning* covers all education ranging from studying for a degree to other learning solutions. Learning is based on the Metropolia Match® model (figure 4) which brings together an individual's competence needs, societal needs and professional life, as well as flexible learning solutions and guidance services based on demand (see 1.4). The goal is to smooth out transitions between educational levels, maintain and renew competence, support career changes, strengthen entrepreneurship, promote employment, and strengthen inclusion.



Figure 4 The Metropolia Match® model

Curriculum work ensures the quality of education

Metropolia has an established **process of curriculum work** in place. In accordance with the degree regulations, the curriculum defines the learning outcomes, contents, prior knowledge requirements and evaluation criteria as well as the scheduling and scope of the studies. The curriculum work is guided by strategy, pedagogical principles, relevance to professional life, internationalization goals, as well as the alignment with the international degree framework and education-related norms and regulations. Various types of feedback from students is applied in the curriculum work. Development trials on using artificial intelligence have been carried out in the curriculum work (see 1.4). The trials include the assessment of professional relevance for the curricula, learning contents of sustainable development and the recommendation of studies that supplement the learner's competence. Using artificial intelligence in curriculum work will be processed further in a project that develops predictive capabilities.

Metropolia's curricula are **competence-based.** The learning outcomes and the competence to be accumulated during the student's study path have been defined. This supports the student-centric education, the recognition of prior learning (RPL), the preparation of evaluation criteria and planning of course implementations. In accordance with the Metropolia Match® model, curriculum work also takes into consideration the needs of non-degree-awarding education for different customer groups, e.g. the offering of the open UAS, specialization studies and preparatory studies for immigrants.

The curricula are updated annually. The extensive curriculum reforms are scheduled in line with strategy periods. The curriculum work in the degree programmes is the responsibility of the heads of schools, who are supported by the management teams of their respective schools. The director of Lifelong Learning approves the curricula and the extensive study modules. The head of school approves the field-specific study modules. The smooth progress of curriculum work is supported by the Learning Development Unit through instructions, support measures and personnel training. The Learning Networks and Services unit as well as the Student and Admission Services direct the planning of solutions in non-degree-awarding education.



Figure 5 Process for establishing new degrees

The process for establishing new degree programmes has been renewed and will be implemented in the autumn of 2022 (figure 5). Development needs have been identified in the study place process. Process renewal is under way. The management group discusses the proposals for new

degree programmes/educational provisions and study places and submits a proposal for the Board of Directors to consider. The Board of Directors makes the decisions regarding the number of study places and the new Master's degree programmes. The change proposals related to educational provisions (Bachelor's degrees) are submitted to the Ministry of Education and Culture.

In education planning, the opinions of Metropolia's stakeholders are mainly received through **advisory boards.** The majority of schools and some of the degrees have their own respective advisory boards that process the curricula. The majority of the advisory board comes from the business world while the rest of the members are personnel and students. The advisory boards have a long history. As a consequence, there is some inflexibility and need for renewal, such as increasing the participation of students in education planning.

Planned learning support

The **implementation and evaluation plan** for individual courses is based on the course descriptions in the curricula. The planning covers practical solutions concerning teaching and learning, learning environments, study materials, work format and workload, teaching methods, alternative completion methods and principles and methods of evaluation. The study workload is measured with ECTS credits. A collective form has been created to support workload planning and to ensure consistent quality. Pedagogic staff members consisting of experts and teachers experiment with and promote good practices in a collegial manner.

The RDI activities and artistic activities have been integrated into teaching in various ways. All degree programmes include an Innovation project. The students are offered work placement and studification opportunities through the innovation hubs' collaboration platforms and RDI projects, and the Turbiini Campus Incubator offers entrepreneurship studies.

The two-phase operating model formed by the curriculum and the implementation and evaluation plan is quite flexible. It allows the teacher and the team of teachers to make changes and adjust the operations based on the students' needs. The operating model gives the teacher the freedom to plan the implementation and evaluation in the best possible way in any special circumstances as well. This became quite important in navigating the change requirements caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
Defining lifelong learning to include all learners and their learning paths in full.	The planning process for the provision of non-degree-awarding education should be simplified.
The process for curriculum work in degree-awarding education is transparent and adopted across the board.	A systematic approach on the HEI level in the planning of degree programmes and a strong link to the strategy; completed development plans for degree programmes by the end of 2022. More extensive utilization of artificial intelligence in the development of education.
A flexible, two-stage operating model for the planning of education specific to each degree programme.	Renewal of advisory board functions; involving the business world in the education planning. Students' opportunities to participate in the planning should be increased.
The activities of the pedagogic staff members incorporate the view of teachers and experts in the pedagogic planning and collegial activities.	

1.1 The planning of education

- Auditointiryhmän arvio

Educational provision is available for a large variety of target groups

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (henceforth Metropolia) offers degree programmes in both Finnish and English at bachelor's and master's levels as well as a wide range of programmes aiming at various target groups. Among the latter, there are so-called pathway studies for international students in English to enable them to pursue a higher education degree in Finland. There are also 'open classes' for teachers enhancing their professional skills or employees from working life wishing to acquire new skills for their careers.

Degree programmes and other educational provisions are well-described in the study guide on the institution's website. Samples from these descriptions indicate that Metropolia puts the envisaged competence-based approach into practice, as the intended learning outcomes include not only subject-specific knowledge and skills but also target subject-independent competences, particularly transversal skills. According to the study guide and the self-evaluation report, the learning outcomes comply with national and international standards.

The educational provision at the HEI matches the institution's strategy and considers working life appropriately. As stated in the audit material, the HEI has renewed its planning process in accordance with its degree regulations and pedagogical principles, which are available on the intranet in Finnish and English. These principles comprise topics characteristic of the higher education institution type, such as learner-centredness, phenomenon-based learning and open-mindedness to manifold target groups. All information on education planning is available on the intranet.

There is very close contact with companies through, for example, external advisory boards, but also strong connections to the owners and the municipalities of the capital area. These close relations ensure that Metropolia offers programmes highly demanded by the local job market, such as in the fields of health and information technology.

The audit team particularly highlights the SIMHE project. A forerunner in the field of education for immigrant students, Metropolia provides not only education but also, for instance, support for working life insertion to this target group. This project is designed with a holistic approach and meets urgent individual and societal needs within a European agglomeration. It may set standards for the successful integration of immigrants into a job market demanding a highly qualified workforce.

The audit team appreciates the ambitious goal to update curricula annually but would advise the institution to reconsider this rhythm after gaining experience with this process. Major adjustments sometimes need time to have a more thorough effect, and considering the degree programmes' amount and variety of fields, this approach might prove too agile in the long run.

Internationalisation bears a high potential for further enhancing education

The planning process will take account of internationalisation by cooperating with foreign universities and providing educational opportunities for international or immigrant students. Metropolia profits from its extensive network of international partners. According to the discussions with staff, there are approximately 300 institutions. At present, there is no systematic approach to the choice of partners. Still, according to the website, Metropolia is part of various subject-specific networks and is a member of the Urban Research Education and Knowledge Alliance (U!REKA).

The degree regulations name Finnish as the main language of instruction but offer the possibility to arrange for teaching and learning in other languages if complying with the curricula. Finnish classes shall support international students' integration into society and the job market.

The website features 13 degree programmes in English aimed chiefly at international and immigrant students. The METKA student union actively integrates international students providing all information in Finnish and English. Yet, the audit team sees high potential for internationalisation at home activities involving international students, especially those who are part of the SIMHE programme. More double-degree programmes would also be a valuable tool for creating a more accommodating learning environment for outgoing and incoming students and contribute significantly to creating strategic partnerships with institutions abroad or enhancing already existing ones.

Metropolia's degree regulations comply with the Finnish National Frameworks for Qualifications (FiNQF). They are available to the public in Finnish and English on the website.

Metropolia's strong connection with the job market serves as an integral part of education

Students at Metropolia profit from a strong job market orientation, which is an integral part of the HEI type. Each bachelor's programme comprises an innovation project of 10 ECTS, the so-called MINNO, which can be considered a Metropolia 'trademark'. Samples from the curricula of the various degree programmes show that the institution ensures the acquisition of transversal competences from the beginning, and various assignments in class help to practice academic working patterns. According to the interviews, staff members sometimes can even link teaching and research and sometimes not. The MINNO project and the HyMy Village (cf. Chapter 2) are particular highlights of a very authentic working life environment.

Students and external stakeholders participate in education planning, mainly on the advisory boards of degree programmes and schools. Discussions during the on-site visit showed that their voice is heard and taken seriously. A concrete example was given concerning distributing certificates by mail during the pandemic, which initially caused additional student costs. It was then taken aback following student complaints at the advisory boards. However, the advisory boards are still a relatively new instrument with a high potential, which is not yet used systematically in all schools and programmes. Metropolia should pay special attention to a more

systematic implementation of advisory boards.

The role of the advisory boards may vary as well. The audit team considers that the role of the advisory boards should be defined more clearly, especially since the advisory board members' involvement in evidence-based enhancement of the programmes bears great potential, which has not been sufficiently used so far (cf. chapter 1.3 as well).

Innovation Hubs, the HyMy Village and the MINNO project also provide a very good link between research and education. At its best, such an innovation project results in a high-quality outcome, which is beneficial to the students working on it and to the working life partner as well, solving concrete problems with scientific methods. In addition, there is positive public visibility for the company and the higher education institution.

MINNO enhances students' transversal skills in real-life professional situations and ensures learning about innovation and development activities. The audit team particularly highlights this pedagogical approach as an excellent demonstration of skills and cooperation between research and working life.

A process approach ensures systematic education planning

According to the audit material, Metropolia has created a collective form to support workload planning. The teaching staff experiment with these forms to check whether the workload is appropriate. Metropolia uses the principles of the European Credit Tansfer and Accumulation System to define the workload of students. However, student discussions during the audit indicated that the actual amount of tasks might largely depend on the individual teaching staff and their pedagogical competence. Apparently, this is mainly due to a lack of time for sufficient class planning, as many teachers have a big quota themselves. At the same time, students perceive teaching staff as competent and responsive to their target group's needs and receive helpful feedback on individual learning progress.

The rules of procedure and the degree regulation guide the approval of all degree programmes and curricula. In the audit material, Metropolia presents the recently renewed planning process for degree programmes: In an initial phase, the head of the school and the director for lifelong learning develop first sketches of a new educational provision, which eventually the management board and the president approve before the school implements the new offer. This approach ensures the inclusion of organisational views into degree programme development and an enhancement from outside the field of studies. Discussions during the audit indicate that the institution has put the suggested plan into practice.

The audit team explicitly appreciates the institution of advisory boards as a practical model to connect studies with labour market needs. However, this particular feature should be communicated even more effectively. According to the audit material and interviews, the students are already represented on all boards and could be more actively involved in annual planning processes. As Metropolia has recently adjusted processes and guidelines, there is a further need for adjustment and thorough establishment of these procedures.