

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Tekijät **Tatjana Volkova, Hans Gruber, Siamäk Naghian, Kateryna Suprun, Mira Huusko & Sirpa Moitus. Self-assessment of the University of Vaasa (eds.) Marja-Liisa Hassi & Tanja Risikko.**

Auditointivuosi **2024**, Karvin julkaisu **28:2024**

Kieli **Englanti**

ISBN **978-952-206-890-3 pdf**

2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

UVA's profile is based around sustainable business, energy and society, a vision that emphasizes solutions to global challenges, and a mission that focuses on both the needs of society and the sustainable development of business. The University binds societal goals to the university's strategy, strategic development programs, the university's goal-oriented management, and the planning and evaluation of operations and faculty. These focus education, research, and innovation as well as internationalization, including knowledge dissemination, collaboration, innovation, and development actions.

The UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#), with a focus on those that reflect UVA's position as a business-oriented, multi-disciplinary research university located in the Nordic's leading cluster of energy companies (Table 1), act as strategic frameworks for the university's societal interaction and impact. Further guidance is provided by the [United Nations' Principles of Responsible Management Education \(UN PRME\)](#) and by recommendations from audits and accreditations. In addition, UVA is working towards the [Finnish Universities Rectors' Council UNIFI's](#) Theses on Sustainable Development and Responsibility (2020).

The key Sustainable Development Goals at the University of Vaasa

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| SDG 7 | Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all |
| SDG 8 | Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all |

SDG 9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
SDG 11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
SDG 12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
SDG 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

The goals of societal interaction and impact are managed by the rectorate, the deans and unit directors, in accordance with the university's management system. The University has an International Advisory Board, whose task is to act as a group that guides and supports activities towards both scientific and societal impact. UVA's plan for impact and engagement is featured in the UN [PRME Progress Report- University of Vaasa \(2022\)](#).

The University reports societal impact to its Board. UVA also reports to the Ministry, who monitor the development of the results and impact goals towards the four-year agreement. The University monitors its operating environment via continuous interaction with stakeholders and higher education, science and innovation policy reports. It also monitors stakeholders' views, as well as the University's reputation and visibility through feedback, reports and media monitoring. The feedback is utilized in the planning of operations. The operational environment data is gathered and analyzed for the rectorate and management team by the service units: finance, research services, education and student services, marketing and communications.

Based on these analyses, the university monitors its key societal impact objectives and designs the measures to achieve them through deliberations involving members of the university's management team and representatives from academic units. The societal impact processes include strategic stakeholder engagement, the use of multidisciplinary research platforms to connect the university and the business community, the use of research, development and education activities as examples of societal impact, diversified science communication, and alignment with the strategic sustainability impact goals.

UVA also seeks to develop a more structured way of capturing its societal impact. To that end it is engaged in the [Business School Impact System \(BSIS\)](#) which offers a systematic approach of recording and analyzing institutional impact on society. UVA participates in societal impact rankings. In the [THE Impact Rankings \(2024\)](#), and aligned with its profile and mission, UVA is ranked 201-300 globally for SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 13: Climate action, and SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions.

Strengths

Enhancement areas

Strategic approach: target setting, monitoring, and rewarding for societal impact are visible and clearly communicated in UVA strategy

Close connections to external stakeholders for proactive monitoring of the operational environment

Societal engagement and impact integrated into evaluations: UVA includes societal and scholarly impact into evaluation processes at institutional and individual level

Awareness of the university's many societal impacts among its [stakeholders](#) should be further translated into milestones and metrics to drive future activities

[Diversify funding sources](#) to enhance societal impact, including the roles that [the research platforms](#) play in promoting societal impact

Establish an institutionalized, visible framework for UVA's Industry-University collaboration (e.g., internships, project work, thesis collaboration)