KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

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2.2 Research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities with impact

- Högskolans självvärdering

Targets, goals for impact and follow-up

UVA has outlined research objectives in its strategic plans: increasing external funding, publishing impactful research, promoting interdisciplinary research, engaging external stakeholders, aligning research with the UN SDGs, and strengthening its research platforms. The implementation of the strategic plan, including the monitoring and evaluation of impact, is the responsibility of the rector and a dedicated vice rector for research, and the deans and platform directors at unit level.

UVA regularly evaluates the quality of its research, the research environment, and the conditions for conducting research. Research excellence is included in UVA's strategy, and is embedded in university- and school- level research evaluation criteria, tenure track and progression criteria, and research group evaluation criteria (RAE 2023). UVA has signed the DORA declaration, which seeks to improve the ways in which the output of scientific research is evaluated. It also has committed to the CoARA principles for advancing responsible assessment of research.

The annual reporting indicators for research include the number of PhDs, the amount and quality of scientific publications, international mobility of researchers, scholarly and societal impact, and

external research funding. Publications, scientific tasks, and conferences are reported to the SoleCRIS research database. The university also collects annual data on employees' societal impact and engagement activities. All research project applications and grants are reported via a project management system (Thinking Portfolio). Information from these systems form the basis of UVA's business intelligence system (PowerBI) allowing UVA to create reports and forecasts.

To promote faculty engagement in societal impact activities, UVA gives out annual awards for Societal Impact and the Science Communicator of the Year Award. UVA launched an initiative 'Mission Possible' to showcase the positive societal impact of UVA research, including a platform for improved science communication activities. The 'Mission Possible' initiative includes a dedicated website in both Finnish and English where articles, news, events and learning resources connected to UVA's impactful research are presented. The site includes some of the societal 'impact cases' that were submitted as part of the university's research evaluation, RAE 2023.

The key accreditation bodies that UVA works with all include sustainability and positive societal impact as one of their key criteria.

Innovation activities

UVA has established the Innovation and Ecosystems team in order to strengthen its research innovation activities and commercialization. The team identifies new ideas and research for commercialization, spars entrepreneurs and promotes co-creation across disciplines. It also cooperates with the innovation and entrepreneurship actors in the region. West Coast Startup was established by the University with VAMK Vaasa University of Applied Science to offer coaching for student entrepreneurs. A two-phased incubator programme and group mentoring in partnership with Demola also provide opportunities for students to solve industry challenges. UVA runs the European Space Agency's Business Incubator (ESA BIC) jointly with Aalto University. UVA also organizes workshops to raise awareness about research commercialization and familiarizing researchers with different IP approaches.

Open and responsible science

The university has implemented a code of conduct policy promoting open science, ensuring high-level research in accordance with ethical principles, and establishing clear guidelines and procedures for handling research misconduct. UVA abides by The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland 2023, Finnish National Board on Research Integrity. It is committed to the ethical principles of the humanities, social sciences and behavioural sciences in all its operations and applies the principles of the European Charter and Code for Researchers as well as the ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. The Graduate School arranges courses on these topics for

doctoral students as a part of their researcher training. The dedicated Research Integrity Advisor is available for consultation about research integrity issues.

The UVA Research Council, chaired by the Vice Rector of Research, is responsible for developing research practices and infrastructure. The Council is supported by the Research Services unit. It monitors and develops the university's scientific activities, the practices of research ethics, good scientific practice, open science, research communication and impact of research and innovation activities. There are committees and working groups for each of these core areas – Science Committee, Research Ethics Committee, Publishing Committee, Research Infrastructure Working Group and Steering Group for Open Science – that report to the Research Council.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
Opportunities to collaborate with industry and the third sector in multidisciplinary research, driven by active ecosystem engagement	Refining the criteria, measurements and reporting requirements for research impact at university and individual level, as well as researcher training
Number and quality of scientific publications, including citations and international co-publications: RAE 2023 revealed that many UVA research groups are at a high international level, and international rankings place UVA among the top in Finland	Strengthening international research collaboration, with a focus on sourcing competitive external research funding from EU funding instruments
Responsible evaluation of research, as reflected in the inclusion of both scholarly and societal impact criteria at university and individual level	Ramp-up innovation and start-up incubation activities for researchers and students together with partners