KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

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2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

Diversity and inclusiveness supporting renewal

Building on its core values of community, courage, and responsibility, the university actively promotes equality and well-being on campus and across the community. Faculty, staff and students are represented in all decision-making bodies, ensuring the consistency of the Mission and objectives with the voice and expertise of the whole community. Gender equality and the integration of international personnel and students into the UVA community are essential for UVA's objectives in social sustainability. The university's performance and progress in diversity, equality and inclusiveness as well as its operating culture are reviewed via biennial workplace well-being surveys. A new internal networking and communication channel Viva Engage will enable more low-threshold idea sharing and connecting with others

As part of an extensive campus development project, UVA has modernized its workspaces to accommodate new ways of working (e.g., collaboration and cross-boundary team working, use of technology). Most university functions are located on the same campus within walking distance, which contributes to easy daily interactions.

Innovative culture via international mobility and multidisciplinary

collaboration

As a part of the university's internationalization strategy, members of staff are encouraged to participate in international conferences, staff exchanges and assignments abroad during distinct phases of their careers. UVA also participates in international programmes such as Erasmus+ and Fulbright. There is a considerable amount of outgoing and incoming staff mobility, both in terms of academic research and teaching faculty and professional service staff. Equally, UVA welcomes visitors to strengthen teaching and research, international cooperation and societal impact. UVA has a long history of inviting part-time, international professors. The new professors of practice also bring in high-level practical expertise and societal knowledge.

UVA's multidisciplinary research environment enables researchers from various fields to work together to find solutions to complex problems. UVA actively encourages collaboration among researchers and faculties across different disciplines and research groups. The multidisciplinary research platforms (VEBIC, Innolab, Digital Economy) serve as an integral tool in the transformation and renewal of the University's operations with the goal to combine strong disciplinary knowledge with prevailing global trends.

Alumni engagement

The university recognizes the importance of alumni engagement and involves alumni in activities such as mentoring programs, fundraising and marketing through e.g. alumni career stories. Alumni also actively contribute to UVA operations by sharing their expertise as guest lecturers and experts, and act as reputation ambassadors. They are reached through newsletters and events providing opportunities for networking and engagement. Alumni are also one of the key target groups for the university's social media including the LinkedIn group "Alumni of Univaasa." After completing a master's degree, a UVA student can apply for an alumni study right for open university studies or normal degree courses to supplement the degree. Additional activities such as regular 'Home coming' days and inviting UVA staff to meet up with alumni living abroad are under preparation.

Cooperation with national and international networks

The University is engaged in several international partnerships and networks to support the renewal of its culture. In managing networks, potential partners are reviewed to ensure the institutions' common interests, long-term commitment, and alignment with UVA's strategy. Criteria based on national and international rankings (e.g., Times Higher Education) and accreditations (e.g., AACSB) are also applied. Of the key networks, the EUNICE alliance membership seeks to strengthen educational and research collaboration on a European level. Engagement with networks such as HERMES and GBSN via the national Global Pilot initiative supports UVA's members to connect globally. The membership in multiple Nordic networks, such as Norek, Nordtek and Nordlys, offer another framework for student and staff exchange.

The University has signed student and staff exchange agreements with about 160 partners in nearly 50 countries. The students' exchange destination interests are followed up on a yearly basis and agreements are scrutinized based on the students' behavior. UVA's commitment to the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education ECHE represents a benchmark In European collaboration. Partnership agreements are reviewed before a possible renewal.

Engagement in international accreditations allow UVA to review its practices and share good practices with external peers for development. For example, the HRS4R development process (the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment) is used as a tool for advancing a working environment that is conducive to research, embraces diversity and supports the career development of all personnel.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
As a relatively small university with a low hierarchy and everyone based on one compact campus, wellbeing results and external evaluations highlight collegiality as a strength of UVA's operating culture	Develop a more structured approach towards diversity, equality and inclusiveness (DEI) activities to support the greater inclusion of international faculty in decision-making bodies
Inclusive communication via regular briefings and information events in both Finnish and English. Regular meetings among university management and student representatives	Work more closely with alumni, including a review of how technology and social media can be utilized to improve engagement
Opportunities for stakeholder engagement via a strong regional ecosystem and membership in high-quality international networks	Develop a more integrated approach towards developing strategic partnerships, including a CRM system and institutionally harmonized forms of collaboration