

# AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Authors **Milena Žic Fuchs, Sebastian Neufeld, Mikael Pentikäinen, Marijk van der Wende, Sirpa Moitus & Mira Huusko, Self-assessment of the University of Turku (eds.) Juha Sainio & Ilona Tuominen**

Year of publication **2023**, FINEEC publications **26:2023**

Language **English**

ISBN **978-952-206-804-0 pdf**

## 2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

### - HEI's self-assessment

#### Management of societal engagement and impact

UTU's societal engagement and impact are primarily based on research and education. They are also implemented via dedicated actions, services and the established roles UTU holds in society and which are grounded in the research and education at UTU.

UTU's societal engagement and impact is promoted and managed by the Vice Rector for Partnerships and Strategic Engagement. The central expert bodies of partnerships and strategic engagement consists of the Council and the Team for Partnerships and Strategic Engagement, [the Advisory Board](#) and [the International Advisory Board](#) (Figure 7). In 2021, UTU established the unit of Partnerships and Strategic Engagement (see chapter 4) led by the Director of Partnerships and Strategic Engagement. The unit supports and develops societal interaction and stakeholder relations regionally, nationally and internationally and coordinates the activities of the Council and the Team for Partnerships and Strategic Engagement.

<b>Council for Partnerships and Strategic Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Chaired by the Vice Rector</li> <li>&gt; Presentation from all faculties (Dean-level)</li> <li>&gt; Outlines and supervises the implementation of the University Strategy in relation to partnerships and strategic engagement</li> </ul>
<b>The Team for Partnerships and Strategic Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Chaired by Director of Partnerships and Strategic Engagement</li> <li>&gt; Presentation from all Faculties</li> <li>&gt; Preparatory body for the Council</li> </ul>
<b>Advisory Board for the University of Turku</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Presentation from strategically important local and national stakeholders</li> <li>&gt; Supports the development of the University's research activities, education and societal interaction, and strengthens impact.</li> </ul>
<b>International Advisory Board for the University of Turku</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Presentation from European Rectors and Vice Rectors</li> <li>&gt; Acts as the University Management's partner in strategic discussions and exchange of ideas</li> </ul>

**Figure 7. Expert bodies related to partnerships and strategic engagement**

Societal engagement and impact are also enhanced with the support of the University Communications led by the Communications Director. The unit develops UTU's organisational identity, profiling, media relations, and shared communication tools as well as assist the in management of strengthening public relations.

In its [Strategy](#), UTU has set the goal of being *a proactive and dynamic partner*. Accordingly, UTU aims to be *a respected and responsible societal contributor* and establish *strong regional partnerships that make UTU's operational environment unique and internationally attractive*.

Quantitative follow-up targets for societal interaction are defined in the University level (Figure 8). Planning, assessment, and reporting of societal interaction and impact in the entire University takes place in connection with annual planning (see chapter 3.1), when units and faculties can showcase their strengths and typical cooperation and interaction.

<b>PUBLICATIONS TARGETED TO PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES AND GENERAL PUBLIC</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Textbooks, professional books, handbooks, guides, and news articles</li> </ul>
<b>DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; For example, regional development</li> </ul>
<b>INNOVATION ACTIVITY, BUSINESS COLLABORATION AND TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; For example, innovation ideas, partner companies, transnational education</li> </ul>
<b>OTHER THAN DEGREE EDUCATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Open University education, continuing education, management training, specialisation education</li> </ul>
<b>EXPERTISE TO SOCIETY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; For example, tasks of an expert, memberships in stakeholder organisations</li> </ul>
<b>INTERACTIVE FORUMS – WHERE THE UNIVERSITY OPENS ITS DOORS TO STAKEHOLDERS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; For example, events directed to the general public, expert seminars, professional events</li> </ul>
<b>PARTICIPATION OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE REALISATION OF THE UNIVERSITY'S MISSIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Collaboration in research (how many partners); visiting lecturers</li> </ul>
<b>PARTICIPATION OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DECISION-MAKING AND DEVELOPMENT WORK OF UTU</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Memberships in decision-making bodies and evaluation organs</li> </ul>
<b>ORDERS AND DONATIONS RECEIVED BY THE UNIVERSITY</b>

**Figure 8. Indicators for societal interaction**

Although strategic goals are shared by the entire University activities based on the Strategy vary between faculties. Faculties are encouraged to have their own bodies, operational plans, and dedicated resources (Vice-dean, personnel to aid in engagement and publicisation of research results etc.) to promote societal interaction and impact. Currently, two faculties have a dedicated committee and one faculty has a strategic operational plan. In addition, UTU has units that are focused on mediating research to the service of society (e.g. [Biodiversity unit](#), [Brahea Centre](#)).

## Decision-making and actions are based on knowledge and open interaction in UTU's operational environments

One of the strategic goals of UTU is to be *an active expert community*. Accordingly, at UTU, *leadership and management are based on knowledge and open interaction*. Also, the Principles and Practices of Leadership at UTU emphasise *practicing foresight and considering changes occurring in professional life and society*.

Information retrieval, creation, analysis and utilisation related to UTU's operational environments take place, on the one hand, as centralised activity in the administration and, on the other, in the faculties as part of their regular work. Firstly, The Strategic Planning unit, led by the Director of Strategic Planning, conducts foresight work and operational environment analysis from University-level perspective in order to support the strategy work and strategic management (Figure 9). The focus is especially on the future. This work is supported by the newly established Knowledge-based Management Initiative (see chapter 3.1).

University/institutional environment analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; National and international comparison with other Finnish universities (positioning, statistics, rankings, state funding)</li> <li>&gt; The needs of the local area (Turku, Pori and Rauma regions, other operating environments, labour and competence needs, stakeholder co-operation)</li> <li>&gt; At national level, e.g. educational needs and responsiveness, economic and financial development and rebalancing, development of internal financial model.</li> </ul>
Forecasting the operating environments of faculty and institute/basic tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Sectoral development, analysis of the operating environment related to basic tasks which is generally continuous planning of activities related to the future in a short (1-5 years) time span (e.g. curricula work, preparation for research funding applications, annual planning, personnel planning).</li> </ul>
Project-like operational environment analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Strategy work, evaluations and accreditations, internationalisation, sustainable development, strategic partnerships.</li> </ul>
Currently under development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Development of a systematic continuous strategic foresight function on the university-level to support University's strategic management and strategy work.</li> </ul>

**Figure 9. Environmental analysis at UTU**

Secondly, UTU has well-established and long-lasting connections with the private, public and third sector in the Southwest Finland and in its campus cities. Through active cooperation, UTU can respond to needs in these regions and proactively development competitiveness and welfare in

the regions. An example of this is the establishment of the Faculty of Technology to tackle the lack of technology experts in the Turku region. Information is also shared in several networks and partnerships (see chapter 2.3) and, for example, through the dual positions that UTU members hold in other large regional organisations (e.g. the City Hospital). UTU is also a contributing member in [the Southwest Finland Foresight Academy](#) and several other networks that operate across the boundaries of different professions and industries, and through which the University can contribute to the regional and national development.

Thirdly, educational policies (e.g. the Continuous Learning Policy 2021–2030) and research policies recognise the importance of foresight and analysis of the operational environment. Hence, they are considered as part of the regular work in order to maintain the competitiveness of education and research. Here, the operational environment is not only regional, but national and even international. The impact of research and education is monitored through annual reporting. In principle, impact is assessed on a per-project basis, e.g. according to funder's guidance. For example, the [strategic flagship project INVEST](#) has developed its own impact metrics, the usefulness of which is examined on the University level, primarily by the Council for Partnerships and Engagement.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
University-level management structure and services are clear and promote and support societal engagement and impact	Creating uniform faculty-level management and support resources for societal interaction and impact
Objectives in the UTU Strategy and actions outlined in the Policy Programme give general guidelines for action	There is a need to create more clarity for the multi-faceted concept of societal impact and engagement in the entire University
UTU holds a well-established and close connection with the local and regional actors in all its campus cities	Usage of indicators for societal interaction in management

## 2.1 Managing the societal engagement and impact

### - Assessment of the audit team

#### UTU is a dynamic and respected partner among its stakeholders

Societal engagement and impact are key elements of the University of Turku's Strategy 2030. UTU has set strategic goals, follow-up targets and indicators for societal impact. Societal impact is mainly realised through teaching and research. Based on its strategy, UTU has set the goal of being a proactive and dynamic partner. The University also aims to be a respected and responsible societal contributor and to establish strong regional partnerships that make UTU's operational environment internationally attractive.

The preparation process of Strategy 2030 from the societal impact point of view was well implemented. Both internal and external stakeholders were broadly involved. Sustainable development has a vital role in the strategy.

Based on the audit interviews, UTU is a dynamic and respected partner and contributor to its stakeholders. That can also be noticed in the comprehensive project portfolio — through broad cooperation with stakeholders, UTU benefits from its partners' resources. The interviews with external stakeholders indicated that the University of Turku has appropriate procedures to ensure that societal engagement supports the implementation of its strategy.

## Strategic partnership operations and strategic engagement operations are well-organised

The partnerships and strategic engagement operations are well-organised and function under the Council, the Team for Partnerships and Strategic Engagement, the University's Advisory Board and different faculties. The bodies have clearly defined roles. However, the activities vary considerably between the faculties. While some variation is justified due to the nature of the different fields, the audit team recommends UTU consider streamlining its societal engagement and impact activities across faculties and a clearer definition of the minimum procedures that all faculties should have in place.

There are also national and international advisory boards at UTU, including external stakeholders. Based on the minutes of the meetings, the boards are focusing on essential themes from the societal impact perspective. The faculty-level advisory boards could cooperate more, for instance, through joint meetings. Also, regular contact and meetings between the University Advisory Boards and the advisory boards of faculties might add value to the UTU community and strengthen its societal impact. The University's International Advisory Board has just recently started. It is crucial to ensure that it will play an active and essential role in the University's development.

Based on the interviews and UTU's self-assessment report, the University of Turku has versatile and active cooperation with its external stakeholders, especially with businesses and municipalities, the third sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and churches. The key partners are well represented in the management system by memberships on the different advisory boards. UTU is doing much cooperation with its stakeholders. As mentioned above, external stakeholders are members of different UTU boards at the university level and faculty levels. There is a good portfolio of indicators for societal interaction. However, information regarding the development of these indicators was not available for the audit team.

From the impact point of view, the University of Turku has important multidisciplinary flagship programmes, INVEST and InFLAMES. Through the flagships, different faculties cooperate with external stakeholders to realise UTU's strategy and increase the societal impact of the University in its focus areas, also internationally. Different faculties and fields also carry out much

impressive societal engagement and visibility. One good example of such unit with a strong societal impact is the Centre for Parliamentary Studies. Furthermore, the Turku School of Economics publishes the TSE Impact & Engagement report annually.

## UTU's enhancement areas for societal impact are well-recognised

The University has identified relevant and well-defined enhancement areas in the self-assessment report. According to the interviews, UTU is developing its operations, such as a knowledge-based management system, Partnership Relationship Management (CRM) operations, fundraising and sustainable development. It is essential to continue this development work.

The model for strategic partnerships currently includes five partners. The target of the University of Turku is to have six to eight strategic partners. It is crucial to have enough flexibility for different partnerships. Partners could also be from the NGO sector. All faculties are encouraged to attend the partnership cooperation. Also, feedback is collected from strategic partners.

Based on the audit interviews, the University of Turku has a deep and value-adding partnership with the City of Turku. UTU also has a notable role in the Cities of Rauma and Pori. Rauma has made significant economic commitments to safeguard the future of the UTU campus at Rauma. The audit team recommends that the University consider the same type of advanced cooperation and partnership agreements with the Cities of Pori and Rauma as with the City of Turku.

The University's Strategy 2030 mentions the Baltic Sea region from the seafaring perspective. With a multidisciplinary approach, UTU could take a more substantial role in preserving and developing the Baltic Sea area. Turku is one of the leading university cities in the Baltic Sea region. The University of Turku could take a more decisive role in advancing its societal impact on the Baltic Sea region. This region is facing substantial challenges that the University could contribute to significantly with the expertise of many of its faculties, for example, environmental and economic development, politics, seafaring and culture.

The Baltic Sea is also increasingly important from the perspective of national defence. There is a possibility for UTU, in cooperation with the National Defence University, to conduct more research on the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, the Archipelago Research Institute of Seili offers unique opportunities for multidisciplinary research related to the Baltic Sea. It is essential to utilise the full potential of Seili.

According to the interviews, UTU's societal impact has been impressive regionally, nationally and internationally. The establishment of the Faculty of Technology is a strong signal of the determination of the University of Turku to serve its region. It can be seen as an international benchmark for the start of the Faculty of Technology to make an impact. The external stakeholders have had a significant role in funding the resources of the Faculty of Technology.

Based on the self-assessment report, UTU updates its strategy when needed based on changes in its operational environment. One recent update mentioned in the audit interviews was

incorporating Artificial Intelligence into UTU's strategy. However, there should be more information generally available on how the changes in the operational environment are being analysed. The audit team supports the University's aim to strengthen the analysis and foresight aspect of its strategy process.