KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OULU

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2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Högskolans självvärdering

Innovative organisational culture

The UO strategy and values *creating new, taking responsibility, and succeeding together*, guide work at the university by encouraging people to collaborate widely and develop actions together. Different space related solutions enable an innovative working atmosphere by offering versatile opportunities for creating new in a multidisciplinary setting.

The UO has recently approved a new language policy to serve the university community, which is becoming more and more diverse. Equal opportunities to participate in the university decision making increases the sense of belonging and helps to understand different backgrounds and the needs of the whole university community. As an example, the UO has carried out visionary work for a future campus with a process that involved all the university stakeholders.

The UO is a founder and leading member of the Oulu Innovation Alliance (OIA), which is a strategic consortium of eight contractual partners that focuses research, development, and innovation in Oulu on three strategic areas and one cross-cutting theme. The development of innovations is based on co-creation and collaboration.

Competence and collaboration opportunities

The Career Centre acts as a facilitator between university units, students, and employers. It arranges recruitment and other events for companies and students to meet. Career Centre facilities can be rented to employers for their recruitment events.

The continuous learning services in the UO are actively progressing to enable the development of skills and competences in any stage of a career and to support the competitiveness of companies. The UO's continuous learning platform is branded as JOY (Jatkuvan Oppimisen Yliopisto – University of Continuous Learning).

The Academic Affairs counselling services caters for students, faculty members and external stakeholders. There are regular *Faculty Meets the Employers* workshops which are organised for regional, national, and international organisations to meet the teaching and research staff. The discussion agenda includes what the graduates can offer to the employers and their needs regarding the working-life relevance of curricula. UIC and KAM representatives help industries to utilise research results and competences in developing their businesses. The university is involved in several joint education development activities including the European UNIC collaboration network, which opens competence opportunities. There is also a Talent Boost project which aims to enhance the recruitment opportunities of foreign students.

Fundraising and donations to the UO are important instruments in funding new research and competencies. Donations make it possible to recruit top scientists, to invest in long-term scientific research and new research areas. The revenue from donation capital is used to strengthen focus areas as strategic funding. Many professorships have been established at the university with donation funds, and several tenure recruitments have been made. The most recent examples are the professorships in Brand Marketing, in Business Ethics and in Micro Entrepreneurship.

Cooperation with alumni

The UO's alumni body is over 62,000 strong. Alumni are an important stakeholder group when communicating about research, university activities, continuous learning services and for invitations to key events. New masters and doctoral alumni can join the Alumni Community, which is a free-of-charge online service for all alumni to stay connected with the university and each other. A member can subscribe to newsletters, event invitations, continuous education, and other communications. Different alumni activities are coordinated by Alumni Relations and the faculties are encouraged to invite alumni actively to their events. An Alumni of the Year is nominated at the University Gala in November.

The Alumni Coordinator and Academic Affairs collaborate with a Mentoring Programme that started already in 1999. Alumni volunteers act as mentors, offer support and insight for the students in finding their own career path. In feedback sessions, mentors claim they benefited from networking with younger generations and learning while the mentees gain clarity on their

future plans. This has proved to be an important incubator of the UO societal interaction, bonding both Finnish and international alumni.

Management of networks

UO research is characterised by its strong connection to the surrounding society and questions that are essential to northern regions. The university has an Arctic strategy and the UO is one of the founding members of the University of the Arctic (UArctic). The UO has a vital role in both the leadership of UArctic and in developing joint activities and networks. Other important networks include the Arctic Five, Allied ICT Finland, European UNIC University, and the Ministry of Education Global Programme networks. The UO is an active partner in numerous local, national, and international networks in research, education, and innovations.

The UO 2020 Action Plan for Internationalisation concerns education, research, and collaboration. The UO also increases global partnerships through the MinEdu Global Programme and participates in seven international networks set up to build collaborative projects. In the national network, the UO is involved in twelve high-quality research infrastructures, including the coordination of Finnish participation in four international infrastructures.

Diverse international cooperation and extensive networks contribute to the UO's high-quality research and education and create opportunities for building a responsible and sustainable future. The strategic collaboration networks are centrally coordinated, like UNIC network and international 6G research network. Some networks arise from the research and education activities within the units. The UO is involved in several cross-institutional networks where students can take studies from other universities.

Strengths	**Enhancement areas**
Career Centre recruiting services.	Improvement of experimental culture.
JOY platform for continuous learning.	Management of strategic networks.
Constant regional dialogue through the OIA.	Stronger alumni engagement.

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

Innovation and creativity are encouraged in the UO community

The university has developed and maintains an open working atmosphere. The audit team found several examples of efforts that help strengthen a creative atmosphere, such as in-person working environments, digital platforms, and applications to encourage innovation and creativity. The University Innovation Centre (UIC), Vice Rector for Cooperation, Cooperation Management Group and Council for External Relations of the university are essential for ensuring renewal.

A certain atmosphere of creativity and spirit of inspiration was tangible both in the interior design work of the university environment but also throughout the audit visit. The Tellus collaboration environment supports the operationalisation of the strategy and the building of an interactive operational culture. Using interior design to support group working and interaction is an excellent approach by the university.

The organisational culture of the university encourages experimental activities with partners. During the audit visit, the audit team was convinced that continuous interaction between the university and its external partners is at an impressive level. Collaboration is an integrated part of the university's organisational culture. The audit team also found that the university staff highly appreciate their colleagues, the creativity, academic freedom, autonomy, and transparency in their work. On the other hand, it came out during the audit visit that some staff experience the organisational culture as traditional, bureaucratic, and led from the top down. The audit team recommends the university to ensure that the voice of the staff is heard at the highest levels of decision-making.

Well-functioning procedures are used to manage collaboration in networks

International networks of the university are essential to the renewal as well as societal engagement and impact of the university. The University of Oulu is involved in several local, national, and international networks. The Oulu Innovation Alliance is the most important local and regional network, involving all key stakeholders in the area, such as the city of Oulu, the Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Business Oulu, and local companies. The alliance monitors and evaluates the ecosystem. Important international networks of the university include UNIC, University of the Arctic (UArctic) and the Arctic Five, as well as discipline-specific networks. Horizon and Flagship projects and CityLab events and festival are also important for enhancing activities. According to the audit visit, University of Oulu researchers are trying to influence funding agency plans at EU level and Business Finland at the national level.

According to the audit visit, Key Account Managers are in contact with key partners and monitor the collaboration. The university has several tools to manage relationships and societal impact such as CRM, Power BI, and Overton. The CRM is used to store information regarding collaborations between the university and its partners. The audit team recognises that there are excellent practices for managing partner relations.

According to the self-assessment report and audit visit, the university has target-oriented cooperation with its alumni, and it utilises them in enhancement activities. The university is aware that it could work even more systematically in the area. The audit team recommends that the university could deepen and expand the alumni network with the international alumni who work abroad. For example, their workplaces and current contacts could be interesting as future partners.