

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

Författare **Marja Sutela, Lena Gumaelius, Damon Mohebbi, Attila Pausits, Marja-Leena Rinkineva, Mirella Nordblad & Mira Huusko. University of Ljubljana self-assessment (eds.) Marina Šučur, Vanja Perovšek & Maja Hosta**

Publikationsår **2024**, NCU:s publikation **3:2024**

Språk **Engelska**

ISBN **978-952-206-835-4 pdf**

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Högskolans självvärdering

An innovative organisational culture is established through various pilot and development projects, which means the new methods, services and information systems are first tested in a restricted context (at an UL member, within a specific service or in the context of a small number of UL members) and only then transferred to the whole UL.

UL reinforces the sense of belonging and connection of its staff through joint actions, which is particularly important for connecting highly diverse members whose staff feel a stronger attachment to UL Member than to the UL. Cooperation takes place at regular meetings of deans, vice-deans, and secretaries general, meetings with representatives of the UL Student Council and representatives of trade unions, the Slovenian Rectors' Conference, meetings of support services and working groups and sessions of university bodies. The [KUL \(Quality at the University of Ljubljana\)](#) project (in Slovene), through which we have enhanced the quality system in conjunction with UL Members, has played a significant part in strengthening the sense of belonging and connection. The project has involved participatory methods of work through which UL Members and various groups within the university have been collaborating in joint work. We have also developed UL Enhancement-led Visits, an approach to the development of organisational quality which we are now applying regularly (more in 3.3). Forms of training aimed at the entire university community (KUL, [DigiUL](#), [INOVUP](#)), particularly those aimed at different groups of staff simultaneously, have resulted in significantly better connections and a greater sense of belonging to the university in that they strengthen connections and understanding

among UL Members and different groups of employees (for more, see 3.2).

The university regularly publishes three internal UL newsletters: one is dedicated to events at UL Members, another is dedicated to events at the Rectorate, and a third is dedicated to cultural events organised by UL Members and the Rectorate. In the spirit of transparency, following meetings of the UL Senate, we send all staff an e-newsletter containing information on the decisions adopted.

The university also organises regular staff meetings, both formal and informal (weekly meeting of the Rector and Secretary General, Rector's New Year's reception, reception on International Women's Day, UL hike on the Path of Remembrance and Comradeship, faculty-to-faculty runs, etc.). Each year we mark the anniversary of our founding with a [University Week](#) (in Slovene), during which prizes are awarded to teaching staff and other staff, students and associates.

Promoting the use of digital competences and collaboration opportunities within the UL community

Along with the activities described in the [DigiUL](#) (for more, see 1.2 and 3.2), we are carrying out pilot updates of individual courses with the didactic use of ICT in collaboration with higher education teachers and other staff. The DigiUL provides support and advice for the introduction of innovative, ICT-supported approaches to learning, the elaboration of study materials and the selection of suitable ICT. It also provides training in the use of the selected ICT or invites participating teachers and other staff to online themed workshops and webinars that are available to all UL staff.

The [Careers Centres](#) offer students a wide range of workshops, training, and individual consultations to help them develop or identify their competences. We encourage students to establish a connection with employers during their studies and devote particular attention to the development of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. For students we hold a regular [“HUD” call for ideas and projects](#) (in Slovene) that is focused on non-technological innovations. In the field of the development of entrepreneurial competences, the [Ljubljana University Incubator](#) is extremely active and offers comprehensive support to newly established businesses.

Cooperation with alumni

UL maintains contact with its alumni through the UL Alumni Clubs Network, which is made up of 63 alumni clubs from all UL members. The Network currently has more than 13,000 members registered on its online portal [alumniUL](#). Via this portal, UL promotes connections and networking among alumni, continuing education, and other activities (for more, see 2.1 and 2.4). The university also encourages lifelong learning for alumni via alumniUL. To help alumni stay in touch with a particular field, we have created [Alumniteka](#) – a cycle of conversations with UL alumni for UL alumni. In these conversations, up to four alumni from different fields are involved discussing a current social topic.

Collaboration and co-development with national, regional and international actors and networks

UL's social responsibility can be seen in its cooperation with knowledge users in cultural, economic, and social fields (for more, see 2.1 and 2.2). Social engagement is also expressed via UL's involvement in national and international networks.

At the national level, UL's partnership with the City of Ljubljana is an important and extensive form of cooperation ranging from individual projects to the broader area of social responsibility activities. UL has concluded a cooperation agreement with the Rog Centre, through which it will gain a creative support environment for the development of innovative, socially beneficial projects. Furthermore, UL's connection with Museums and Galleries of Ljubljana (MGML) allows it to use their premises for an exhibition of Student Prešeren Prize winners' final projects.

Also at the national level, an agreement on strategic cooperation for technological development and innovation breakthrough has been signed by representatives of the government, the Rectors' Conference, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and research institutes.

The [UL Global Alumni and Associates Network](#) (SMUL) brings together Slovene scientists, professors and other notable figures working in the academic, research and development fields abroad. It was conceived as an activity to boost the quality of study programmes and strengthen international cooperation.

UL regularly updates its list of [international cooperation agreements](#). Different forms of cooperation are developed at various levels, from the UL level to the level of UL members. International partnerships and networks are an important quality assurance and development tool, since they result in close ties with the best universities in the fields of research, teaching and social participation. Although the focus can vary depending on the specific characteristics of individual networks, in general terms cooperation of this kind means opportunities for additional activities (e.g. joint study modules or virtual mobility), co-creation (joint think tanks, preparation of joint recommendations, new joint initiatives) and better cost effectiveness (by pooling resources). The university also promotes cooperation in the context of EU projects and the Erasmus+ programme, since in this way financial support can be offered to students and staff. The university as a whole will continue to strengthen its activities in the context of [various international networks](#). The aim of all these connections and cooperation is to support the realisation of UL's strategy and promote shared values.

Owing to the large number of agreements signed, the university is currently in the process of consolidating its international network of partners and wishes to focus more on existing partnerships and cooperation within strategically more important international networks and associations (The Guild, Eutopia, EUA, Rectors' Forum of Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans) and regions (Western Balkans, Africa).

Strengths

Strong European and international networks.

Permanent cooperation between the UL Career Centres and UL Alumni.

Cooperation with the business sector in evaluating potential innovations.

Enhancement areas

Strengthening collaboration between the Rectorate and UL Members to achieve further alignment and efficiency in performance and implementing changes.

Enhancing cooperation with alumni and improving the potential of the alumni network – strengthening cooperation with UL Alumni at the international level; the possibility of introducing a system of micro-credentials and updating of the catalogues of competences.

Stronger integration of researchers and industry, especially in the context of developing future-proof professional profiles.

A greater focus on cooperation in strategically important international networks and associations.

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

University actively promotes an innovative organisational culture

According to the audit visit, the higher education community were clearly very proud of their university. At the audit workshop, staff spoke about a sense of belonging to the university and a purpose to their work. The rich variety of disciplines, the culture of openness to different ideas, new insights and moving towards internationalisation were highlighted as strengths of the university. The university was considered as alive, brave, and not afraid of challenges.

Based on the audit visit, the UL demonstrated a commitment to cultivating an innovative organisational culture by encouraging experimental activities within the university and with partners both nationally and internationally. There was a lot of space for grass-root-level innovations and initiatives, to work with local communities, businesses and with international

partner universities. The university used a project-based approach often linked to additional funding to promote interdisciplinary projects, upcoming topical issues such as AI, and the personal development of its staff. One of the initiatives included enhancement-led visits to different faculties and academies with the aim to boost quality, exchange practices and to strengthen cooperation within the university (see also the discussion in Chapter 3.3).

Based on the teaching staff workshop, the staff were encouraged to be innovative, to try new ideas, and to develop their knowledge and skills both in research and educational provision. Examples mentioned included the INOVUP teaching and learning workshops, UL support for the digitalisation of teaching and learning, various university- and faculty-level pedagogical and research conferences, and professional faculty gatherings and meetings.

A key strength of the UL was its culture of self-reflection, self-development, and self-renewal. This ethos was embraced across various groups, reflecting a shared commitment to personal and institutional growth. The UL staff were involved and invited to participate actively at the university. There was also clear encouragement for international cooperation and mobility, attending international and national conferences, and various other ways for staying up to date with latest developments and trends. All this strengthened the conditions for a creative atmosphere. On the other hand, a lack of time was mentioned by several interviewees and workshop participants as one of the main obstacles to innovation and attending various offerings at the university. Especially the administrative burden of the academic staff was considered high, as discussed elsewhere in this report.

The UL demonstrated its aspiration to be a learning organisation by actively benchmarking itself against international peers and drawing insights from leading universities worldwide. This was a clear sign of its dedication to ongoing improvement and innovation. On the other hand, there would be ample opportunities for benchlearning merely within the university. According to the audit visit, there was unused potential at the university in terms of cross-faculty and interdisciplinary collaboration, sharing and learning. This was highlighted by the interviewees and particularly by staff who participated in the audit workshop. There was a desire among the staff to work more together and to get to know each other better within the university. Working more together, the university could achieve much more, learn a lot and much faster, as mentioned in the workshop.

The university is working in an agile way with its external stakeholders

As discussed above, the UL effectively engages with external stakeholders, including media, industry partners, ministries, and society. The university has a central position in Slovenia and is networked both with public and private sector organisations with many alumni and former academic staff members of the university working in several key positions in the country. The UL is active in transferring its research and activities to the public, e.g., by frequently organising or taking part in events in Ljubljana. Further enhancing public involvement in research and embracing citizen science could facilitate broader engagement and strengthen the societal

impact of research projects. Among others, the academic staff highlighted the need to strengthen the role of science and scientific argument in wider society. The cooperation with other universities in Slovenia was less described during the audit visit. Such cooperation takes place through different national networks and collaboration projects, such as the UNI.MINDS project to showcase best practices of collaboration with the commercial sector, and the INOVUP project improving the quality of higher education.

The industry partners described the cooperation with their university partners as very agile for a such a large university. The university's receptiveness to the needs of society and industry when planning study programmes and course content was commendable. Based on the audit, most of the collaboration takes place at the faculty level mainly due to the decentralised nature of the university. Some representatives for external stakeholders and staff considered interdisciplinary projects involving several faculties of the university as challenging due to the different systems in place in each faculty. This is one of the key challenges for the university for the future. The need for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to meet the future needs of the labour market and society were recognised by several interviewees. The university needs to maintain its agility and good existing cooperation with its external stakeholders, but at the same time promote and facilitate more efficient and flexible cross-faculty interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation internally and externally.

The university actively uses international cooperation and networks for enhancement

The UL's participation in European projects signifies its active role and commitment to the broader European research agenda. The diverse range of projects undertaken by academic staff across various disciplines highlights the university's capability to contribute to and benefit from the collective European research and innovation efforts. The UL's involvement in international networks, such as EUTOPIA, highlights its commitment to enhancing its activities through global collaborations. This network provides a platform for sharing best practices and insights from partner institutions. The UL has a wide range of international cooperation agreements and over 200 partners globally with the intention to use international partnerships and networks for quality assurance and development. The number of international agreements is not relevant but the quality and content of those agreements. Therefore, the UL's intention to consolidate the international network is encouraged. This would allow more efficient management of agreements and better and systematic evaluation of the impact of the respective cooperation.

Cooperation with alumni and continuous network management

The UL collaborates with its alumni and utilises the alumni network to enhance its activities. The university's extensive national networks, which include alumni and partnerships with local and regional companies, strengthen its linkage with the outside world. These connections foster collaboration, knowledge exchange and innovation that transcend academic boundaries.

Collaboration with the alumni is a significant strength of the UL, and it is evident that this cooperation is robust with 63 alumni clubs integrated into the UL Alumni Clubs Association. Alumni activities are also well integrated into university initiatives. The institution engages the alumni effectively, involving them in mentoring programmes, shadowing, and collaborative activities at both national and international levels. The university leverages its strong alumni network to host networking events, guest lectures, different events and seminars, mentoring programmes, its own surveys, social media accounts, alumni portal and a podcast for alumni called “Alumni Talk” further integrating alumni into its activities. The management of the clubs are supported by organising training events and meetings by the university. While these processes seem more activity-oriented, the university could benefit from a more goal-oriented approach in its alumni and network management. There is room for improvement in the continuous management and updates of alumni and stakeholder networks to ensure their sustained relevance and impact.