

AUDIT OF THE LAPPEENRANTA-LAHTI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY LUT

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2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

The impact of the university at the heart of LUT's strategy

LUT affects society particularly at two levels: globally through research across different themes of sustainability, and at the corporate level by providing businesses with experts, expertise and practical solutions.

Strengthening the university's impact is reflected in [LUT's strategy](#) and action plans that guide the strategy implementation. The strategy slogan 'science with a purpose' expresses that the strategy aims for strong effectiveness. Strategic success is monitored through impact indicators, e.g. business and industry cooperation, the employment of graduates and the carbon negativity of the university. The university's internal funding model supports the implementation of strategic goals in the schools, and the performance agreement between the university and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) contains the same objectives.

Management of agile societal interaction

Strengthening the impact of the university's activities is one of the tasks of the university's top management, which is strategically guided by the board. The division of duties of administration supports cooperation with national, international and local partners. Deans and directors are responsible for societal interaction management in their units. The Director of Administrative Services is responsible for the societal interaction processes that increase the impact of research

and education, and the vice-rectors have a key role in the strategic development of these services. The meetings of the university management committee, administration and directors of University Services units support the management of societal interaction.

LUT's societal interaction consists of established procedures to support collaboration with key external stakeholders. Each of these processes has a designated coordinator and quality management procedures to ensure continuous development: e.g. innovation services support and monitor patents and invention notifications, and the Junior University assures the implementation of its curriculum.

Societal interaction requires flexibility to respond to emerging challenges and changes in the operating environment. As a result, societal interaction is diverse and agile. From the point of view of quality management, the situation is challenging, but it is important for LUT to respond to the changes in the operation environment. Thus, new forms of cooperation are actively developed as exemplified by the [J. Hyneman Center](#), [Firmatiimi](#) and [innovation services](#).

Wide-ranging information of the operating environment

The management service unit supports the administration and staff members responsible for different units or activities in monitoring and analysing the operating environment. Information on the operating environment is collected and utilised e.g. in defining the strategic focus areas, in developing different functions and in positioning in the national and international higher education field. The challenge is that the information, as well as the expertise on its contents, is often scattered throughout the organisation.

The university operating environment is analysed regularly when the university revises its strategy and applies for competitive funding from the Academy of Finland. The management committee and board annually receive a summary of the university's statistics, and the need for specified unit level positioning statistics has increased.

The MoEC supports the university's operating environment analysis with the publicly available information base [Vipunen](#) and in meetings about current issues in the international and national higher education field. [The Academy of Finland](#) collects, analyses and delivers data on science and research. LUT's [EU office in Brussels](#) monitors developments in the European Union. LUT obtains information on regional development by participating in regional programmes.

The university's top management and experts participate in national higher education cooperation forums, such as [UNIFI](#) and national events, which address the future of the whole country. Information is passed on e.g. through meetings of the university's management committee and administration. National cooperation in university education and research is utilised e.g. in profiling research and planning degree programmes. In addition, external evaluations and international assessments of education and research support the development of the university's activities and impact.

Strengths

Striving for impact as a strong strategic goal
Agile development of operating models
Operating environment analysis utilising several data channels

Enhancement areas

Activating LUT experts to influence in decision-making and public engagement
Coordination of cooperation with external stakeholders
Information channels for monitoring societal interaction and impact

2.1 Managing the societal engagement and impact

- Auditointiryhmän arvio

Strongly strategy-driven management of societal engagement and impact

LUT's objectives for societal engagement are guided by its mission, given a strong direction by its strategy and further specified in LUT's strategic action plan 2020–2025. As mentioned in the self-assessment, LUT's strategy, 'Trailblazers 2030', with the strong focus on sustainable development and science with a purpose is, per se, aiming for societal impact. The three action plans 2020–2025 further define how LUT attempts to reach its strategic goals, responsible parties for the implementation, and indicators for measuring achievement. The strategic development of LUT has been a long-term project, in which the two previous strategies and the current one have built on each other.

Based on the LUT quality manual, the key impact indicators and strategic objectives for societal engagement to be reached by 2025 are:

- 10 showcases of research excellence
- 15% annual increase in citations (Scopus)
- 100% of publications open access
- € 5 million annual funding by the European Commission
- € 5 million external revenue from education annually
- Graduate employment rate tops that of other universities
- Leading partner in industry cooperation in Finland
- Carbon negative LUT in 2024.

LUT manages activities that promote societal engagement and impact in several different ways. These activities are tightly knitted into everyday research and education. As described in the documentation, the university sees societal engagement as rooted in research and education but at the same time facilitating the other two missions. This is also reflected in LUT's operations

management and follow-up of societal engagement and impact, which at the operational level is focused on indicators of research and education. The influence of the [performance indicators of the Ministry of Education and Culture](#) (MoEC) is apparent. The MoEC performance indicators are also internal funding indicators and form the basis for the annual performance targets set for schools and are linked to incentives and the salary system. The indicators are monitored closely and openly reported within the university community. The statistics concerning the indicators are put together by the university services for the management committee, schools and departments, and the results are reported at every management committee meeting by the deans of the schools.

The MoEC funding indicators, as such, do not give a sufficiently comprehensive overview of monitoring data on the societal engagement and impact of LUT's activities to support the achievement of its strategic objectives. Therefore, the audit team commends LUT for its strategic action plan, which includes a much wider spectrum of quantitative but also qualitative indicators defined for each action to be taken under the three-part action plans. There are also several indicators related to societal engagement and impact such as IPR transferred to enterprises in research projects to highlight the benefits of collaboration with LUT or following the employment rate of international graduates to improve their integration in society. Based on the interviews and documentation, LUT's strategic objectives and the strategic actions planned are systematically followed up by a set of indicators at each board meeting. The board's annual cycle also includes checkpoints when the implementation of the strategy is discussed. In addition, there is a more in-depth bi-annual evaluation of the strategy to follow up achievements, where the institution is heading and if any adjustments are needed. As for other HEIs, one of the university's main impacts on society is achieved through its graduates as future employees who change companies from within or as entrepreneurs. As mentioned, graduate employment and salary levels are monitored and compared with other universities. The way LUT monitors its impact seems to support the levels where it is aiming for impact. Nonetheless, by integrating some of the key objectives and indicators of its strategic action plans in its annual operations plan, the university could further enhance how the management system supports the achievement of its strategic objectives, including societal engagement and impact.

The overall management responsibilities for societal engagement have been clearly defined in the quality manual. LUT has also identified key mechanisms and processes that pursue LUT's objectives and support societal engagement, which include alumni relations, career services, continuous learning, external communication, the Firmatiimi business outreach team, innovation and commercialisation of research results, the J. Hyneman Center for rapid prototyping, Junior University and sustainability. J. Hyneman Center and Junior University are examples of excellent enhancement activities (See Section 1.4.).

LUT actively analyses its operational environment

In the audit interviews, LUT top management, board representatives and the deans of schools broadly approached LUT's operational environment. The interviews confirmed that the University

Board and management actively collect and analyse different signals from the operational environment. In this work, LUT uses both external sources such as networks, benchmarking, following international universities and competitors, companies, strategic partners, research institutes and think tanks and experts as well as LUT internal experts such as professors. As an example, the board organises informal meetings the evening before the official meeting where the board meets these experts to discuss topical issues. The audit team considers this a good practice. The interviewed deans mentioned various inputs and fields they followed, depending on the school. The foresight information was discussed at management committee meetings, meetings at faculties and as part of strategic development. LUT also has a separate advisory board consisting of influential stakeholder representatives with broad business and political experience relevant to the LUT profile. The advisory board is used in analysing the operational environment; it was involved in the strategy round with future-oriented discussions. The chair of the University Board is now the chair of the advisory board, creating a link between the two boards. LUT actively evaluates what kind of information it needs and then gathers it. LUT has functioning ways to analyse its operational environment, but some management representatives wished for more foresight into their activities with an emphasis on long-term insight and forecasts.

Overall, the improvement actions related to societal engagement and impact are taken at different levels as part of strategic management, analysis of the operational environment, partnerships and collaboration with customers, as also identified by LUT. The information LUT receives is used to set the direction for its activities. There were several examples of how LUT had used the information as the basis for decisions. The evidence confirms systematic planning, implementation and follow-up, and improvement of activities related to societal engagement and impact. LUT is managed in a way in which the strategy permeates the activities of the institution, the action plans provides a clear direction for the activities, and there are a variety of indicators to measure success in the set objectives. LUT actively engages with its surrounding environment, uses various ways of collecting foresight information but, at the same time, is proactive in its approach and wants to influence its environment so that it would be favourable for its development and funding.