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FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE LAPPEENRANTA–LAHTI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY LUT

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2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- HEI's self-assessment

Open your mind at LUT

LUT's values encourage all university community members to think innovatively and try new ways of working. The open-minded organisational culture is visible in the university's brand, strategy, communication and working practices. Establishing the unique LUT Group is a practical example of LUT's innovative culture, as is the 2016 Firetail evaluation, which listed LUT as one of the world's top 20 challenger universities for 2030.

LUT's operating culture is characterised by a low hierarchy and easily approachable administration. Staff and students are encouraged to participate and present their ideas e.g. in surveys concerning strategic targets and the renewal of the LUT websites. Piloting is used to test and refine new operating models. The university has piloted e.g. career planning included on courses.

In development projects, the best experts are invited to contribute, and both staff and students work together towards a common goal. Students often provide crucial added value in the university's activities and they are hired to work as tutors, research assistants and career service assistants.

Special functions, such as research platforms and the J. Hyneman Center, strengthen LUT's

innovation activities. In 2020, the Oivallus-team was established to improve the user experiences of LUT through service design e.g. in cooperation between the university and companies.

Strengthening partnerships

To increase the efficiency and impact of its operations, LUT targets long-term strategic partnerships in research and education. The aim is to establish strong international research partnerships to advance the impact of research, to build high-quality educational cooperation, and to help regions and companies to prosper through university cooperation.

LUT has launched a key account management approach to enable systematic, effective and expanding cooperation with select partners. The model will cover a wide range of corporate and academic cooperation. Joint research, academic and student mobility, and the creation and co-use of research infrastructure are developed with academic partners. LUT's schools have identified the international partner universities with the most potential, LUT's benchlearning partner Politechnico di Milano (PoliMi) being one of them. The current educational partner universities are presented on the LUT website.

From the beginning, LUT has been known for its corporate collaboration. In addition to research and teaching personnel, multiple actors are operating at the company interface. LUT has recruited professors of practice since 2013, and industry professorships have been introduced in 2020. LUT has several processes to support cooperation with companies e.g.: Laboratories and LUT Voima offering technical services to companies, and Firmatiimi helping companies to find students to complete assignments for them. There are plenty of examples of cooperation where new knowledge and solutions have been created with external stakeholders (e.g. Kivisalmi pumping station). However, the need to serve the company interface more effectively has been identified. Key account management has promoted the cooperation and the first two strategic partnerships (with Yaskawa Environmental Energy and Danfoss Editron), and collaboration with the first recruitment partners has started.

Active networking with stakeholders

Networking with prior stakeholders supports LUT's development and strengthens its impact. LUT is a member of several international scientific and educational networks (e.g. EIT Raw Materials, European Energy Research Alliance EERA, and EFMD). By actively participating in university networks, e.g. EUA, Scancor and Nordtek, LUT has been able to strengthen student and researcher mobility and benchmark various practices. LUT's Brussels Office supports cooperation and impact with EU actors and participation in the UnILiON network's activities.

LUT contributes to several national research networks and associations (e.g. Finnish Water Forum) and educational networks (e.g. FITech). Regional activity concentrates on the regions where LUT's campuses are located. The university has a key role in regional development together with the local cities, the LAB University of Applied Sciences and other public actors. LUT

cooperates with local companies daily and is part of regional networks such as the Greenreality Network and Saimaan vesiensuojeluyhdistys ry.

Alumni – the priority partners

According to multiple surveys, LUT's alumni – both on MSc and DSc – strongly identify with the LUT community and actively collaborate with LUT. Many LUT alumni act in the administration of the university, in the University Board and in the University Advisory Board.

The role of alumni as mediators or partners in research projects is remarkable. They are visiting lecturers on courses and offer real-life course assignments or final thesis topics to students. Alumni have proudly marketed their own degree programmes to applicants and actively recruit new graduates to their employer organisations. The annual alumni survey results are used both to follow the careers of alumni and to develop education. However, LUT's procedures to utilise the alumni potential and guard their interests need to be systematised. The target is to create processes, services and an infrastructure which enable alumni – both Finnish and international – to professionally participate in the education and research at LUT.

Strengths	**Enhancement areas**
Innovative organisational culture with a low hierarchy	Strengthening key account management procedures
Students as co-workers to increase the impact of the university	Strategic development of alumni activities
Variety of means to support companies	External and internal research communication

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Assessment of the audit team

Organisational culture supporting innovation and collaboration

Based on interviews and workshops during the audit visit, it is clear that LUT fully lives up to its core values of 'Courage to succeed' and 'Passion for innovation through science'. The organisational culture is open and sharing. There is a strong community spirit and collaborative atmosphere that cuts across department and school boundaries and embraces management, staff, students and stakeholders alike. The audit visit clearly manifested an entrepreneurial 'can

do' organisational culture in which new ideas and innovations are encouraged within the university and with partners. There is a desire to solve things together as well as a will to improve and go further. There were various examples of activities, some of which are also listed in Section 2.4, building on co-development, innovation and research with partners, local businesses and students. The interviewed stakeholders said that LUT is easy to approach, agile and a university with good culture and people. It was mentioned that there is a short way from idea to implementation at LUT. LUT works actively to maintain and develop a creative campus atmosphere, e.g. by initiatives such as the idea box for suggesting ideas, meetings for pitching ideas and the J. Hyneman Center, where students can create different prototypes. A new initiative, LUT Oivallus, is a small team helping staff in accomplishing their goals and trying new ways to perform, e.g. through testing, prototyping, facilitating and using service design methods. Among others, LUT Oivallus has worked to help researchers to create more impact for their research or improve company partner experiences. However, it was noted by some interviewed staff members that more channels for sharing within LUT and collaboration between departments are still needed. There is collaboration with students on many levels, but there is still room to further engage students in development projects that relate to undergraduate and postgraduate education. LUT is also aiming for stronger internationalisation and a more international campus. Therefore, it is important for LUT to keep its international staff and students in mind in all its activities.

The strategic orientation of LUT is also reflected in its partnerships

The university wants to invest in long-term strategic university partnerships in research and education and with companies. As described in the interviews, the university tries to find good matches with top universities to support a high level of research and education in its profile areas. One such example is the Polytechnic University of Milan, which was the university's benchlearning partner in this audit (see Chapter 5). LUT also seeks collaboration in which it can join efforts and get expertise to complement its own. The university has long experience in programme partnerships and double degrees. Unsuccessful partnerships have been terminated. The university clearly seeks added value, especially partners that support the achievement of its strategic goals. It was noted during the interviews that one challenge for LUT is the management of its partnerships and that more long-term partnerships are needed. Many of the contacts are personal, making them vulnerable to staff changes, and there may also be too many requests for some academic staff members. The strategic partnerships and customer relations system are some mechanisms applied to improve these issues. The representatives of strategic company partnerships described in interviews a deep cooperation with LUT, comprising many levels of the organisation and both research and education. In some cases, the research collaboration was so integrated that the company representative could not draw a line between LUT's research and the company's RDI. The dialogue in the partnerships is systematic, and the partnership concept appears as a win-win collaboration for both parties. Interviewees also highly valued that the university does not only focus on global impact but also has different mechanisms in place to actively connect with small and medium-sized businesses. One such example is the corporate

outreach team, Firmatiimi. The university's role in the region is vital as underlined in interviews, and there are close connections between LUT and the local cities.

LUT has been one of the first universities in Finland to start a consortium with a university of applied science. The LUT group includes LAB University of Applied Sciences with which LUT has shared support services, information systems and a growth strategy. As described in the interviews, new ways to collaborate and find synergies that benefit both parties are constantly sought after. LUT also has deep cooperation with the Finnish technological universities and the University of Helsinki.

LUT reaches out to all its alumni with a feedback questionnaire within five years after graduation. LUT provides networking and other services to both alumni organisations and alumni. LUT hosts alumni seminars and an alumni day is planned. The threshold for participating is kept low. LUT's improvement targets for the alumni field include the development of alumni resources, programme-level alumni feedback and alumni participation in the implementation of studies.

LUT is a relatively small university and takes full advantage of its size and the combination of technology and business. With a clear direction, systematic approach and with activities and mechanisms directed at different target groups and levels, LUT succeeds in engaging and creating impact at the regional, national and international levels.