

AUDIT OF HäME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

HAMK's operating culture includes common objectives, responsibilities, and freedom to develop

The strategy **guides** the activities through the system of target management and the MBO system. The work is steered by objectives, guidelines and instructions, and jointly described processes. The use of guidelines and instructions has an established position, ensuring uniform quality and equality.

The operating culture also strongly encourages **cooperation and co-creation**. Creative, multi-disciplinary, multi-professional, and project-like manner of working is characteristic for co-creation. Co-creation is visible in development groups (e.g. RDI Support Team, Study Guidance and Counselling Group). Competence development is encouraged by means of supervisor work, HAMK 100 coaching programme, and career paths. Experiments and renewal are resource-targeted (e.g. Lead team and Design Factory).

In education, the **module model** provides the student and the teacher with the opportunity for individual learning and teaching work. In RDI, the operating culture is concretised in **multi-disciplinary cooperation** between research units, such as RDI projects (e.g. Bioeconomy 4.0 and Carbon 4.0).

Renewal and continuous improvement are promoted by **experiments**. HAMK supports experiments that further the achievement of strategic objectives. Examples of such experiments include the DP of Information and Communication Technology, Bioeconomy that is based on the needs of the labour market and crosses educational boundaries; the transfer of teaching to a module model; and the Entrepreneurial University concept where students are offered the opportunity to experiment as part of the module studies. Also feedback culture supports renewal (e.g. Rector's students' consultation).

Networks enable renewing societal interaction

HAMK influences the development of its operational environment in networks. Certain networks support regional impact. Business networks are built with sectors relevant to HAMK profiles, with education and RDI experts leading this area. International networking is managed strategically, and these networks are regularly assessed. Recent assessments have concerned mobility partner networks and international strategic partnerships. Based on the assessment, strong and functional partnerships were identified, and networks were reformed to serve the needs of students and HAMK.

At the **regional** level, companies and labour market organisations, other NGOs, and secondary level education providers belong to HAMK's partner network. Connections with municipalities and regional business operators (e.g. business developers and chamber of commerce) are essential. The ecosystem of the City of Hämeenlinna (sustainable bioeconomy), the Bright Green business network of the Forssa region, the Circular Economy Village of Riihimäki, and the Data Network of Tavastia Proper are examples of regional networks.

At the **national** level, the networks with developers and decision-makers in selected sectors are essential for HAMK. Networks of [Rectors' Conference](#), development networks for lifelong guidance, higher education pedagogy, and vocational education and training, the National Teacher Education Forum, as well as Steel Construction Excellence Center network, the Finnish Constructional Steelwork Association, and Industrial Biotechnology Cluster Finland are such networks. The most significant RDI projects are implemented in a multi-disciplinary manner in networks formed around the projects (e.g. [Bioeconomy 4.0 and Carbon 4.0 networks](#)).

The beginning of **international** alliances is the Beyond Alliance in 2015. Based on evaluations, HAMK has now mutual strategic partnership with Feevale University (Brazil) and a partnership with Via University College (Denmark). HAMK's most significant alliance is the [Regional University Network European University](#) (RUN-EU). European Universities are reforming European education, creating joint education and RDI activities, and the RUN-EU connections are of great regional importance. HAMK is currently building also its partner networks outside the EU.

Research units are involved in international **innovation ecosystems** (e.g. [The Africa Action Plan](#)). HAMK's Design Factory is part of the international Design Factory network. International partnerships renew education and RDI, and improve the preconditions for obtaining business and

international funding.

[HAMK Global](#) has an extensive international network of **education system developers**, committed experts and education influencers. This provides HAMK with an international impact on the reform of education systems and the raising of the level of education.

The **alumni** are part of HAMK's network. Alumni work is carried out for each degree programme. The contact details of the alumni are maintained in a joint register and all alumni receive joint communications. HAMK's career monitoring team monitors alumni career progress through a national career survey. For research units, the alumni form a channel for partnerships. HAMK Edu and the international HAMK Global Education alumni in professional teacher education have built cooperation, in which alumni have become important research partners for HAMK. Alumni activities are found to be more widely in need of development.

HAMK's CRM system has been renewed and its use has been optimised based on the evaluation of experiences from previous systems and practices. Updating the IT system and its more comprehensive utilisation helps to manage contacts and reduces personal dependence on network relationships.

Strengths

RUN-EU is a significant amplification of internationalisation.

International research project networks, specifically Africa network.

Determined efforts to build, join and develop networks together with competence development.

Enhancement areas

Increasing the utilisation rate of the CRM system and strengthen the routine for its extensive deployment.

The contents and operating methods of alumni activities need renewal.

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

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A creative atmosphere and a spirit of innovation shape HAMK's organisational culture

In the interviews, HAMK's organisational culture was described in such terms as "loving the learning", "thinking outside the box", "feeding design thinkers" and "loving the breaking of the silos". The audit team heard convincing statements that HAMK is successful in encouraging

piloting, prototyping and executing experimental activities. This spirit is well reflected in its organisational culture and demonstrated in HAMK's Design Factory as an example for long-term commitment to innovation, multi-disciplinarity and design thinking.

Design Factory is an area of activity where the centralisation of critical mass and the decentralised nature of education can lead to creative tensions, but also creative solutions. The fact that Design Factory concepts have more often emerged in larger urban universities is no indication that such innovation platforms could not be successfully promoted and implemented in a more rural setting and at more decentralised campuses as the example of HAMK demonstrates. Furthermore, HAMK's Design Factory could provide a valuable benchmark for the whole RUN EU alliance, through building and embedding the idea of Design Factory and design thinking into a more decentralised and regional university. This could have great international, and even global relevance.

The interviews also brought confirmation that HAMK's organisational culture is conceived by a spirit of listening to the clients and collaboration partners, of dialogues and co-creation and regular active interaction with stakeholders. The management and maintenance of networks as an institutional and organisational asset are in place, and a shared, renewed CRM has recently been put in place and taken into use, playing an important role in this process.

Further development of relationships with alumni could be more active

Alumni are increasingly seen as an important asset but could also be used more actively to increase the pride in the local / regional university. More systematic and long-term work with alumni and the need to ensure a better dialogue and over-all monitoring of their views and experiences was discussed in the audit interviews. This seemed to be work in progress. For regional universities in particular, alumni are an underestimated resource and all forms of retaining them in the university network are welcomed, from guest lectures to "alumni of the year" awards, as was confirmed in the interviews. Regional stakeholders were the ones who most actively emphasised the further potential of alumni, as their continuous commitment to their Alma Mater can be a resource in many activities, from lobbying and investments to project-based problem solving and brand marketing.

HAMK has well-functioning procedures for managing and updating its stakeholder relations and collaboration networks

HAMK has various active national and international networks, and during the audit, it became clear that this active collaboration created added value for students, staff, and stakeholders. The management and maintenance of networks as an institutional and organisational asset are in place; HAMK's CRM system has been renewed and optimised based on the evaluation of experience from the previous systems and practices and was recently taken into use.

A variety of national and international networks are invited to take part in active collaboration

and enhancement of activities. The RUN EU alliance is a particularly promising example of networks and offers unique opportunities. HAMK's participation in the RUN-EU alliance offers further opportunities for peer learning with partners, students and colleagues, and profiling HAMK as a place where creativity and experiments foster a bold growth mindset. In the interviews, the audit team heard of examples of how international alliances, strategic partnerships, HAMK Global and Design Factory can also play key roles in attracting international students, building bridges between students and research companies, and developing solutions as well as creating new connections. During the interviews, the audit team heard about forms of concrete collaboration (e.g., mobility of international teacher trainees as an important means of supporting internationalisation).