KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND

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2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Högskolans självvärdering

A strategy to encourage renewal

Throughout its existence, the university has deconstructed its operating structures. The university has invested in promoting dialogue and interaction between the university's leadership, faculties and its departments, for example through departmental tours by the rectors and virtual information sessions open to the whole community. Open webinars are used as a low-threshold way to explore topics and to involve staff and students in the development of activities. The new research governance system will ensure flexible interaction between the different research actors. The education network involves all actors.

University of Eastern Finland evaluated its research activities in 2015-2018 in UEFRAE2019. The selected research communities (RCs) completed self-evaluation reports, which served as background information and evaluation material for the external evaluation panel. The panel evaluated research excellence, collaboration, impact, operational conditions, strategic visions and implementation plan and gave a numeric evaluation on current research performance, future potential and renewal and overall performance. The panel pointed out that the four grand challenges build on existing strengths, and these profile areas frame the research communities. Research community was seen as valuable concept, which the UEF may wish to develop further. The panel concludes that the RCs are most efficient when they have a a rather well-defined focus and somewhat limited scope, which allows development of an international status, shared vision

and academic leadership in identifying future directions. Good leadership practices were found and sharing best practices overall would develop the research communities' activities.

The university has annual internal strategic funding available to run a range of pilots and trials to encourage collaboration between units. Funded actors will present the results of their projects in open events or webinars to ensure the dissemination of good practices generated through new initiatives. The university will annually evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic measures and, if necessary, redirect funding based on the evaluation.

Internal Proof Of Concept funding will help promote Start Up entrepreneurship.

The alumni of the University of Eastern Finland include all graduates of the University of Eastern Finland, as well as former graduates of the Universities of Kuopio and Joensuu. The university organises regular alumni events and publicises events and activities through regular alumni newsletters. The university also supports the organisation of alumni events by the units. The university monitors the development of the network's membership as part of the annual monitoring. The alumni events have been developed on the basis of feedback received. In recent years, particular attention has been paid to the offering for international alumni, for example by organising alumni evenings in the country concerned in connection with various international visits.

Cooperation between the University of Eastern Finland, Karelia University of Applied Sciences, and Savonia University of Applied Sciences is contractually wide-ranging, including joint RDI, training and service activities. The activities are guided by a steering group of rectors. Expert groups have been established to steer and concretise these joint operations. In 2021, strategic cooperation was implemented especially in the organisation of the ICT education pathway, Social and Health Economy programmes, and support for bioeconomy, circular economy, and internationalisation in Eastern Finland. The universities have a common contract lawyer, as well as shared research facilities, and other structural cooperation. Education exports will be carried out through a network of higher education institutions in the region, making use of the expertise of all higher education institutions and creating more attractive education products and pathways suitable for education exports.

The university is involved in the DRAFT Program coordinated by Karelia University of Applied Sciences and the Business Center North Savo coordinated by Savonia University of Applied Sciences. Both aim to boost research- and knowledge-based innovation and entrepreneurship.

The university works systematically with campus cities, both in terms of student recruitment and integration into the region. The university is also an active player in campus city innovation ecosystem agreements.

The university is the coordinator of Neurocenter Finland and is an active participant in the Biocenter Finland network.

The university is a member of one of the first European university networks, which were launched in autumn 2019. Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) develops higher education with ten universities and four other partners. The university is a member of the Young European Research Universities (YERUN), Nordic Centre at Fudan University (NCF), Nordic Centre in India (NCI) and Southern African-Nordic Centre (SANORD) networks. In addition, the university's faculties and departments are members of numerous discipline-specific university networks.

The university is actively involved in research, education, and development programmes of the European Union (EU), the Nordic Council of Ministers, and other international organisations. UEF is a member of UniPID (University Partnership for International Development), a network that promotes cooperation in education and research in the Global South. The University of Eastern Finland has signed a cooperation agreement with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

The university's cooperation networks are well established and are managed and monitored as part of the university's management system. New networks often come from outside the university or, for example, from national higher education policy needs. Some of the networks are temporary.

All the university's international networks have a designated person in charge and a coordinator. The functioning and relevance of the international networks for the university is reviewed annually, and individual networks are reviewed whenever there is a need for a new person in charge.

Strengths	**Enhancement areas**
Strengthening an open culture	International alumni networks
A flat organisational structure enables a quick response to the internal change needs of the university in terms of higher education policy	Development and management of business cooperation structures
Internal strategic funding for development activities	Utilising the potential of networks more widely
UEF leadership's virtual information sessions	
Cooperation between the universities of Eastern Finland and a joint steering group	
Systematic monitoring of networks and cooperation structures	

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

UEF has a low-threshold organisational culture

UEF's very low-threshold organisational culture was mentioned in almost every interview. This is an asset while fostering an open and transparent, innovative, and creative atmosphere. During the audit visit, several references were made to the university's working environment as being informal and easily accessible.

The university has many examples of good practices to spread both within and outside the university. The audit team encourages UEF to strengthen the culture of praising success and be prouder of its achievements. At the same time, it should allow doing more perhaps even failed experiments and learning from them. UEF has annual internal strategic funding available to run a range of pilots and trials to encourage collaboration between units. This is a good practice which the audit team values. However, the audit team recommends to ensure that the university also have more formal procedures and processes in place for innovation, ideas, and suggestions.

Even though UEF organizes several events and activities for alumni, the representatives of the student union and international students were not aware of any alumni activity. There is a huge unused potential in local, national, and global alumni networks, businesses, and industry. The audit team recommends the UEF to make the alumni network known to all present students. They should have an alumni package for graduated students. UEF could also build an international alumni network for graduates with international backgrounds. Alumni can be role models for current students.

The potential of local alumni in business cooperation is a good tool to bring in working-life expertise or subject-related specialists to existing programs and courses. A more structured way of cooperation might lead into a more measurable result. This is a regional development, attractiveness, and retention issue, especially for international students.

Systematic collaboration with different networks would support enhancement

Local and regional networks were mentioned several times also in terms of keeping the region alive and vivid. The audit team sees that UEF should have an active role in creating, maintaining, and participating in those networks. All UEF's international networks have a designated person in charge of it as well as a coordinator. Also, local and national networks and partnerships should be almost as important to UEF than international networks.

The audit team finds that the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) is promising network and a great opportunity for UEF. The YUFE network offers opportunities for joint degrees, staff training, and different kinds of international benchmarking. It also offers a stronger voice on the European arena together with environmental analysis. The YUFE ought to be used in an

optimal way. It could be a good practice to use encouragement as a catalyst for change.

International networks were mentioned widely by interviewees, but some of them were also based on personal contacts. The audit team recommends using international, national, and local networks more systematically and in an enhancement oriented way. The university should also think how to manage the existing networks better, whether a system or tool is needed for that and how it could update local, national, and international stakeholder relations and collaboration networks in a more innovative way.