2.4 The HEI's examples of successful enhancement activities

- HEI's self-assessment

Strengthening the university's interdisciplinary research communities

The university has systematically developed the conditions for interdisciplinary research and supported its development both structurally and through internal strategic funding. The University has 14 thematic, interdisciplinary Research Communities (RCs), whose research is international, of the highest scientific quality, and generates interdisciplinary research knowledge and solutions to global challenges in the university's profile areas. All the university's RCs have drawn up action plans. The RCs have a designated leader and coordinator, and coordination groups have been set up to coordinate their activities. Community approaches are key to PROFI activities.

A sustainable and responsible university

The UEF 2030 strategy [Seizing a sustainable future](#) is based on global challenges to which we seek solutions in our profile areas through multidisciplinary research and education, thus building a responsible and sustainable future. Our work is guided by ethicality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have been implemented in both research and teaching.

The university's efforts to achieve the SDGs are twofold. As a scientific community, the university's education is based on research and evidence-based information and the impact these

have on society. As a work community, the university's day-to-day operations support the achievement of the SDGs. We develop the university campuses and operations with the aim of minimising their impact on the environment.

The research and teaching content on sustainability and responsibility emphasises not only ecological sustainability but also the two other dimensions of sustainable development, namely socio-cultural and economic sustainability. The university has strong national and international expertise in climate research, for example, relating to [health](#) and [climate change](#) and [environmental law](#). The UEF's strong focus on sustainability and responsibility shows widely in university's education, for example in the School of Forest Sciences and the Department of Environmental and Biological Sciences. The university is also involved in virtual universities, such as the [Climate University](#) , and education networks such as [Biodiversity.](#)

The university is committed to taking action to mitigate the effects of climate change with the goal of the university becoming carbon neutral by 2025. The 'Eight Steps to the Future – Sustainability and Responsibility Action Plan 2022-2025' brings together the university's sustainability and responsibility activities, knowledge, and practical measures to achieve the goal. The first goal of the project was to assess the university's total carbon footprint in 2020. University has also compiled Sustainable Development Report built around the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The reports are published on the university's [website](#).

Creating real sustainability and responsibility requires the involvement and practical action of the whole university community. For example, the university uses 100% renewable electricity, offers a tax-free commuter bike benefit to its employees, provides campus gardening on its campuses to improve well-being at work, and takes sustainability and responsibility into account when tendering for university services. The university works closely with regional actors and our partners, such as Suomen Yliopistokiinteistöt and the restaurant service provider, are strongly involved in promoting our sustainability goals with us.

The University Sustainability and Responsibility Group coordinates and develops UEF's sustainability and responsibility activities, and acts as a link to the university community through its members.

UEF shared doctoral student position system

The university was the first Finnish higher education institution to introduce the shared doctoral student position system at university level in all its doctoral programmes in 2020.

The aim of the shared doctoral student position system is to ensure that the expertise of doctoral graduates from the University of Eastern Finland is more widely utilised in business and industry and elsewhere in society. This form of funding will promote the employment of doctoral graduates outside universities.

Through the system, doctoral researchers work full-time on their doctoral thesis, with the employment relationship split half between the university and the other employer. The second employer could be a company, an organisation, a research institute, a municipality, or another public sector body. The university and the second employer fund the employment of the doctoral researcher, who is hired on an equal share basis.

UEF leadership's information sessions

The university's leadership holds UEF virtual information sessions, open to the whole university community, 4-5 times a year. The information sessions are delivered online, ensuring broad participation. During the information sessions, the Rector, the Academic Rector, and the Director of Administration talk about the university's current affairs and a variety of themes. Topics covered in the information sessions have included the measures and effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the university's finances, educational expansion, the university's strategic programmes, the effects of the war in Ukraine, and campus development. Participants in the information sessions have the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the discussion via an electronic discussion platform. UEF's virtual information sessions have received a lot of positive feedback from across the university community.