KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF METROPOLIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Tekijät **Andreas Breinbauer, Birgit Kraus, Ilkka Pollari, Mari Ruadze, Marja-Liisa Saarilammi & Niina Nurkka. Self-evaluation of Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (eds.) Virve Kentta, Eeva Viitanen & Anna Zaikova**
Auditointivuosi **2023**, Karvin julkaisu **9:2023**
Kieli **Englanti**
ISBN **978-952-206-760-9 pdf**

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

Fostering a people-oriented operating culture is part of the strategy

People and Culture is one of the five themes in Metropolia's strategy. Metropolia's operating culture was renewed when the operations were centralized to four campuses during the 2016–2020 strategy period. In the renewal, a participatory work approach was added to the operating culture. The operating culture highlights dialogue, diversity, and openness as well as experiments to develop new operating models. **Regularly convening forums** (such as the leadership forum and the sparring forum for superiors) that are part of the management practice bring up topical matters for the community to discuss. The use of dialogue is supported by the **manager of dialogue** working in the Communications unit. The participatory work approach supporting dialogue and co-creation is promoted by the **internal process sparring service Parru** (see 3.4).

Metropolia is in strong interaction with society. This is manifested in making campuses available for local residents and companies and via Metropolia's operations as an HEI responsible. For example, many services provided on the innovation hubs' collaboration platforms are openly available and Metropolia's facilities can be used for a variety of activity. In this way, Metropolia strengthens communality in local areas and contributes to renewal.

Collaboration platforms enable experimental development

The innovation hubs' collaboration platforms located on campuses provide an opportunity to conduct experiments, tests, pilots and to learn new things. The platforms are physical environments featuring a diverse infrastructure for the use of education and RDI activities. To students, this is manifested as various implementation environments in the MINNO studies and as other joint projects. Platforms are also integrated with the surrounding city, offering services and events to city residents and partners.

The Myllypuro campus features the HyMy Village of well-being services (see 2.4) and the SmartLab development platform for smart homes, which is a flat designed for the development and testing of technology. The Helsinki XR Center on the Arabia campus is Europe's largest centre for augmented reality. The centre is a platform for research and enterprise cooperation and brings together teams, startup companies and larger XR actors and financers. In 2019, the Myyrmäki campus launched the Business Avenue service, which currently includes the following collaboration platforms:

- Urban Farm Lab – An ecosystem of indoor food production
- Electria Factory – Metropolia's electronics manufacturing plant
- Metropolia Workshop – Automotive and transportation RDI services
- Robotics and IoT – Digital solutions for industry

The innovation hubs' ability to support the experiments is strengthened by budget renewals. The goal of the renewal is to enable phenomenon-based operations and to clarify the cooperation between schools and innovation hubs. The renewal is being piloted as cooperation between two schools and one innovation hub. Annual planning and administrative procedures (e.g. work time planning and tracking) should be made even more flexible to ensure that their structures do not impede fast, experimental operations.

Metropolia cooperates in networks nationally and internationally

Metropolia is part of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area ecosystems. Their goals combine both Metropolia's needs and the social and economic objectives of the Metropolitan Area. The project portfolios of Metropolia's innovation hubs are linked to the goals of other agents in the area. Diverse participation in the operations of the surrounding ecosystems helps Metropolia renew its own networks. The objectives of network cooperation are included in the action plans of the innovation hubs and schools. The CRM system is used for the needs of the partnership model (see 2.1) and the ecosystem activities. Personnel play a key role in building national and international networks. They can develop their international competence through internal training and staff exchange.

The Myllypuro campus renewal was planned and implemented in cooperation with the City of Helsinki in such a way that the new higher education institution campus has also become a

valuable resource for urban development. Coordinated by Metropolia, the Health Proof Helsinki (HPH) joint project with the Hospital District of Helsinki and Uusimaa (HUS) and the City of Helsinki is building an internationally networked entity of RDI services for the region's well-being and health technology companies (see 2.4). In the Campus Incubators programme run by the City of Helsinki, Metropolia develops business incubator operations for its campuses and supports student- and research-oriented entrepreneurship. Metropolia participates in the Urban Tech Helsinki incubator which focuses on clean and sustainable urban solutions, together with the University of Helsinki and Aalto University.

Metropolia is a member of the strategic 3UAS alliance of the three universities of applied sciences in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The alliance has strengthened Metropolia's RDI competence and prerequisites of receiving external RDI funding. It also has strengthened education paths between higher education institutions and shared use of the research infrastructure. 3UAS has a representative in the Uusimaa province's cooperation group.

Metropolia is a member of the European strategic U!REKA alliance of seven higher education institutions focusing on urban areas. U!REKA meets the research and innovation needs of large urban areas and promotes the international development of pedagogy as well as international student and personnel mobility. The New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative selected Metropolia as its official partner. This enables Metropolia to strengthen its role on the EU level (see 2.4). International networking is supported by the international action plan and the road map for the development of EU activities. This includes partner networks' development measures.

Alumni are part of Metropolia's network. Metropolia's alumni activities offer opportunities for networking between alumni and between alumni and current degree students. In addition, they provide the alumni with information on further study and continuing education opportunities and highlight alumni's career stories. The members of the alumni register receive a newsletter on Metropolia's topical matters 1–2 times per year. Alumni communications are centralized to the alumni portal and provided in both Finnish and English. Each degree programme and alumnus/alumna take the action they deem most appropriate within this framework. Sector-specific alumni networks are strong. However, according to the self-assessment, the alumni cooperation on the Metropolia level should be more diversified. The development responsibility for alumni cooperation was clarified by assigning it to the Learning Networks and Services unit in the spring of 2022.

Strengths

An operating culture based on dialogue.

The campuses' collaboration platforms as open innovation environments for students, personnel, and partners.

Enhancement areas

Promotion of a consistent innovation culture throughout the organization.

The application, further processing, and commercialization of RDI projects.

Metropolia is a highly desired cooperation partner, as demonstrated by HXRC, Metropolia Proof Health and NEB, among others.

Functioning cooperation with innovation actors in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and other higher education institutions.

Modern application of Metropolia's existing tools in the management of partnerships, such as the case management system, CRM, and Halli.

Broader and more systematic use of alumni as working life experts in teaching and project operations.

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

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'Metropolia spirit' encourages a creative atmosphere

Metropolia is in the middle of a transformation process. Major internal renewal will apparently continue, as one of the strategic goals is to be a 'bold reformer'. Obviously, the momentum of change can and should be used to further enhance processes and operations. The audit visit showed that the phenomenon-based approach, great facilities and the 'Metropolia spirit' encourage and enable creativity. This is essential for constant renewal; maintaining and developing this spirit requires attention. The audit team recommends that Metropolia ensure that encouraging the 'Metropolia spirit' is not tied too much to specific individuals.

Innovation is not possible without the ability to receive and understand weak and strong signals. The organisation should be geared to sharing and steering such signals inside the organisation for sources of ideas for improvement. Forecasting future trends together with the Technology Industries of Finland is an example. Using big data and artificial intelligence for job searches and other employment information for planning curricula is another example of Metropolia's use of various 'radars' in its planning processes.

Metropolia is a preferred partner and collaborator

Being the largest university of applied sciences in Finland, Metropolia is a natural and desired collaboration partner for higher education institutions and schools in the region. The interviews showed that the main stakeholders, owners (cities), institutions and companies rely on Metropolia UAS with their needs of skilled and motivated professionals—or RDI services and results. Since 2018, Metropolia has established bilateral cooperation with hundreds of companies. Metropolia UAS is historically well-established in the region and is well-geared for multilevel contacts with all external stakeholders. The interviewees described the international presence, mentioning

contacts with some 200 higher education institutions.

The whole organisation is geared towards active multilevel external contacts. On a national level, this certainly works, but the international network partners could be sources of more progress. The high-profile HXRC is an excellent example of networked success.

Eyes on the future

Forecasting is a more systematic approach to mapping future landscapes. During the interviews, the audit team learned about Metropolia's approach to forecasting, including stakeholders (owners, industry associations and institutions).

Metropolia uses its partner and stakeholder networks well in its planning processes. There is a general multidisciplinary partnership model and, due to a long history of cooperation projects including many model agreements. Again, new opportunities are there to be found and enhanced in the international field. Metropolia keeps in touch with alumni through newsletters and social media channels. According to the interviews, alumni and lifelong learners' roles are essential sources of ideas and resources for Metropolia in their enhancement activities.

The interviews also confirmed to external stakeholders that Metropolia UAS is a big influencer and trailblazer on the national level. The audit team recommends that international networks could and should be emphasised more in the future.