3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

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General description of the UVA quality management system

At UVA, the quality system is integral to the management and implementation of the university's strategy. UVA's quality policy serves as a foundation for the university's quality assurance. It defines the university's quality goals, key players in quality management and a participatory quality culture. The quality management system, described in the Quality Management Manual, compiles UVA's principles of quality management, the elements of the continuous improvement culture, the most important guiding regulations, and the most important operational processes and responsibilities. It ensures the quality of UVA's activities, including research, education, and societal impact at institutional, school and education programme levels (Figure 6). The task of the Steering Committee for Quality Management and Accreditations, chaired by the Rector, is to oversee quality monitoring and development at the university.

UVA's quality management is in line with the principle of continuous development according to the European EFQM reference framework. The university's operations are structured using the quality circle, or the PDCA circle – PLAN, DO, CHECK, ACT.

Act

- ▸ Development of research activities
- ▸ Development of educational activities
- ▸ Development of stakeholder cooperation
- ▸ Development of study and work environments and services
- ▸ Competence development and practices

Organisation culture that supports community

Check

- ▸ Implementation of the strategy, internal monitoring and self-assessments
- ▸ Annual reports, financial statements
- ▸ External audits, accreditations
- ▸ Stakeholder feedback
- ▸ Student surveys
- ▸ Personnel surveys

Plan

- ▸ Strategy and strategic development programmes: Education, Research, Internationalisation
- ▸ Planning of education, research, and societal interaction
- ▸ Planning of services and practices that support the well-being of the university community
- ▸ Annual planning and budgeting procedures

Guiding principles and norms
Management system
Quality assurance practices

Do

- ▸ Implementation of the strategic development programmes
- ▸ Research
- ▸ Teaching, guidance, and learning
- ▸ Societal interaction and impact
- ▸ Student services that support learning and well-being
- ▸ Practices and services that support personnel well-being and competence

Strategy

Energy Transition & Technology

Business Management

Sustainable Business, Energy and Society

Governance & Society

University community

Figure 6. The PDCA Model of the UVA Quality Management System

UVA's mission, vision and strategic objectives were developed in a participatory process, engaging the whole university community. The process is guided by universities' statutory obligations and the strategic targets agreed with the Ministry, which include degree targets, internationalization, and the profiling of research. This is supplemented by the national financial model for universities.
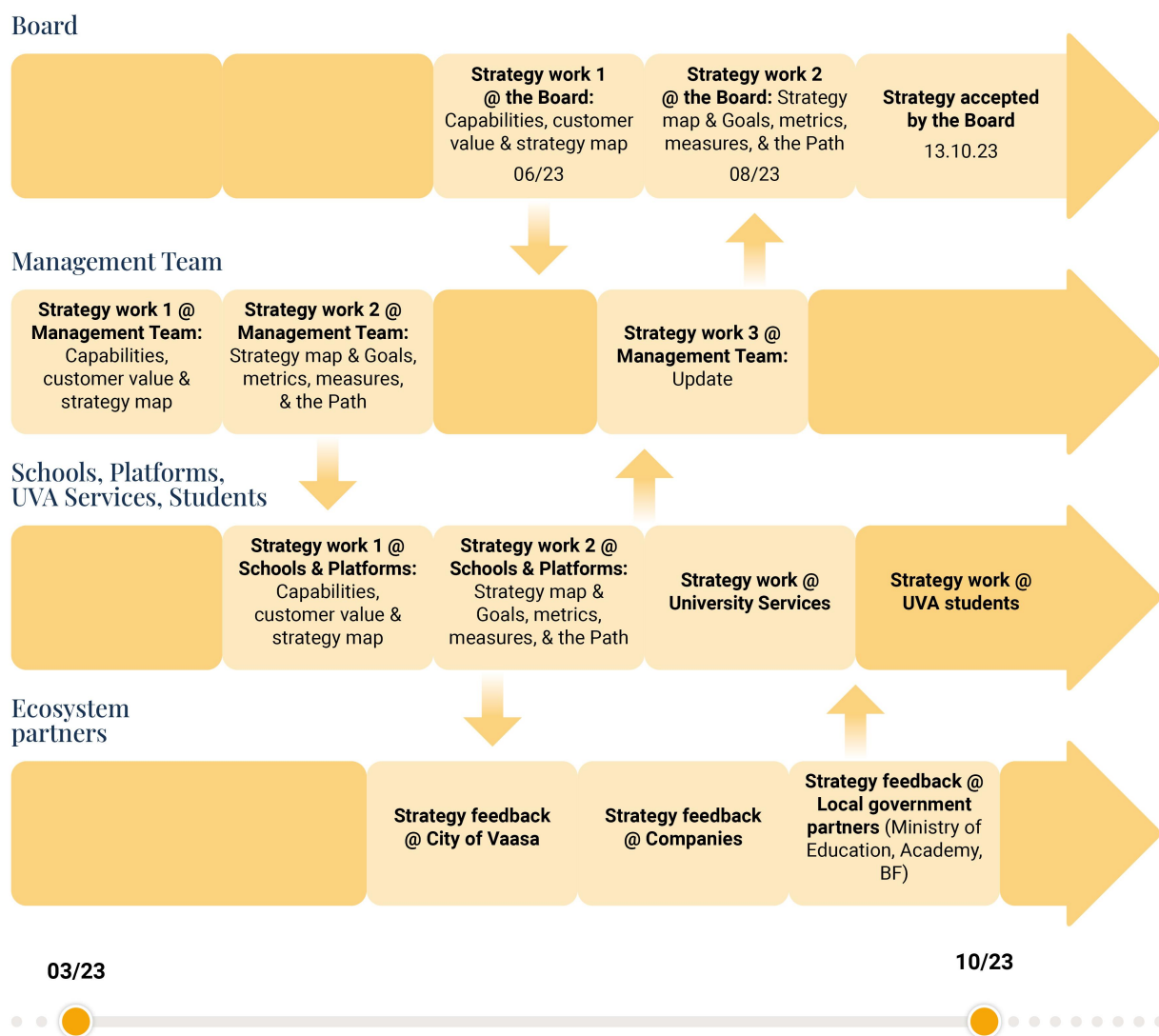
Figure 7. UVA strategy review process (2023)

The performance agreement with the Ministry sets out objectives and targets for UVA, emphasizing responsible and open science, research excellence, sustainable development, and societal responsibility. Strategic planning serves as the basis for the annual budgeting and strategic review process, ensuring successful implementation. The information gathered from stakeholders, strategic planning, and resource allocation processes help shape the direction of UVA's activities. UVA also focuses on resourcing its growth plans by continuously improving its resource allocation model and performance-based management system. This includes developing a resourcing model and expanding the use of existing key performance indicators (KPIs) reporting system.

UVA employs an annual operating and financial planning process (TTS process), which involves consultations between the schools, the service units and the rector, thus ensuring that goals, actions and performance are aligned with strategic objectives. The annual strategy and

budgetary review allow schools, platforms, and services to report on goal achievement and plans for the next year, ensuring alignment with UVA's strategic goals.

UVA engages different stakeholders in its strategic planning and management. The university bodies have representation from all groups in the university community, with a variable composition in Education and Research Councils. In addition to members of the university community, the Board engages external stakeholders. The bodies and representations are featured in Table 2.

	UNIVERSITY COLLEGIUM	UNIVERSITY BOARD	EDUCATION COUNCIL	RESEARCH COUNCIL	SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT GROUPS
Students	5	1	3	2*	3
Professsors	5	3	3	4	3
Teaching and research staff Other personnel	5	2	7	9**	3
External members	0	5	0	0	0
Total	15	11	13	15	9

* including undergraduate and graduate students
** including deans and platform directors

Table 2. Stakeholder representatives on university bodies

The bodies provide a platform for faculty and staff to contribute to UVA's strategic direction. The rectorate and the deans have regular meetings with the student associations, and student representatives sit on all the main decision-making bodies of UVA. Student Forum, chaired by the Vice Rector of Education, gathers the student union and student associations with university lead and student services for regular discussions. Alongside the international science networks, input from regional and local stakeholders (local municipal government, city bodies, employment agencies, industries, employers and interest organisations) is used in various ways. External stakeholders are represented on the UVA Board, UVA International Advisory Board, Programme-level Advisory Boards and the research platforms.

Strengths
Quality management system is designed to promote and incentivize continuous improvement throughout the institution

Enhancement areas
Development of external benchmarking practices to supplement stakeholder input

Quality management system provides a clear framework, including roles and responsibilities, for coordinating quality management activities

The quality assurance actions in the university, school and programme level are steered towards UVA strategic goals

Aligning the programme-specific quality assurance and good practices to build harmonised, university level quality management practices in all programmes

3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

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The Quality Management System supports the profile of UVA

UVA positions itself as an international, business-oriented, and multidisciplinary research university focused on sustainable business, energy, and society. The university aims to become an internationally recognised high-impact research university in order to provide a transformative learner experience and have a positive social impact. Information on UVA's vision and mission is included in the Quality Management Manual and other documents, such as the UVA Strategy 2030. The strategic management of activities at UVA is reflected in the systematic implementation of the university's strategy through the quality management system, which supports the achievement of UVA's strategic objectives related to the core activities and the implementation of its strategy.

UVA has long focused its quality work on the accreditation of study programmes, such as AACSB, EQUIS, EFMD, EDAMBA and ASIIN. The university's quality policy was developed and approved by the University Board in June 2024. It is a part of the Quality Management Manual, by decision of the Rector in June 2024. The quality policy is also publicly available on UVA's website.

There are slightly different versions of the quality policy statements in the Quality Management Manual and the quality policy on the UVA website. There are some discrepancies between the quality policy and the Quality Management Manual. The audit team recommends that UVA ensures that the two documents align. The quality manual needs to be clarified so that it can be separated from the quality policy. In the version on the website, there is a section on the quality policy and a separate section on a quality management and continuous development model. UVA has defined the critical elements of the quality policy (principles, objectives, and responsibilities) and the key elements included in the Quality Management Manual. The audit team recommends further reflection on the Quality Management Manual by including all necessary elements under

the quality policy. The quality policy enhances understanding and commitment and thus provides an excellent everyday basis for quality work.

The quality management system covers education, research management and societal engagement activities to ensure quality. The Quality Management Manual covers all aspects of UVA's quality work and thus supports its strategic management. Processes are in place to aggregate data from the information systems for the different decision-making levels at the university. The audit team recommends that data aggregation processes be incorporated as part of the Quality Management Manual and complemented by other data collection procedures. Interviewees during the audit visit also felt that the Quality Management Manual should be more specific and descriptive in terms of processes and responsibilities.

The effectiveness of using information generated by the quality management system could be improved if clear strategic goals for quality work are formulated and later monitored. The UVA Strategy 2030 sets strategic goals for JUFO points, the number of students who graduate, and attracting competitive funding. The strategic plan is in place to support the realisation of the UVA Strategy 2030. The university's strategic objectives for quality improvement would help to organise quality work and decision-making better. The board regularly discusses the achievement of quality objectives. On the other hand, the audit interviewees would like to have more precise quality goals and their measurements. In addition to monitoring its current indicators, UVA could benefit from more systematic monitoring of student and alumni feedback, staff well-being and societal impact. The audit team recommends that UVA consider setting objectives in these areas and monitor their achievement.

The quality management system includes description of the system, governance and principles

The quality management system of UVA is based on a cycle of continuous improvement (Plan-Do-Check-Act). The system is built to support the university's profile, achieve strategic goals and fulfil its vision. According to the Quality Management Manual, the quality management system's objective is to help ensure that UVA can operate according to its objectives. The manual states that the overall responsibility for the quality of results lies with the Rector. The Rector is responsible for the quality system as a whole and its functionality and reports to the university board. Each employee and student is responsible for the quality of results and activities in their task and role as a part of the university community. Internal and external stakeholder participation in the various stages of continuous development is envisaged.

UVA applies national quality assessments and international accreditations to support quality enhancement. The quality governance bodies include the schools' management group, the educational council, the research council, the research group, the deans, the directors of units, the director of university service, the university management group, and the quality working

group. The management group monitors the overall functionality and development needs of the quality management system. Based on the audit interviews, the work of the committees could focus on internal quality management and its integration with external quality management. The audit team recommends that these quality governance bodies are mentioned in the quality policy.

The audit team recommends that UVA specify principles of continuous development and consider integrating other principles of quality management in the quality policy, such as a process-based approach, evidence-based decision-making, leadership, and engagement of people and others, which would lead to revisiting existing quality management practices, harmonising critical processes, and improving the quality management manual. Thus, such an approach would support the better organisation of the quality management system and its leadership.

According to the audit visit, UVA's strategy has been developed collaboratively, involving the board and all staff. The strategy is discussed at all board meetings. UVA successfully ensures that staff members recognise the connection between their work and the university's strategic goals. According to the audit visit, UVA has committed staff who are proud to work for the university. Involvement and participation in quality activities demonstrates a high level of staff commitment and engagement to further improve UVA's activities. Societal engagement and impact are an integral part of UVA's activities at institutional and programme level.