

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

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3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

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.



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](#).

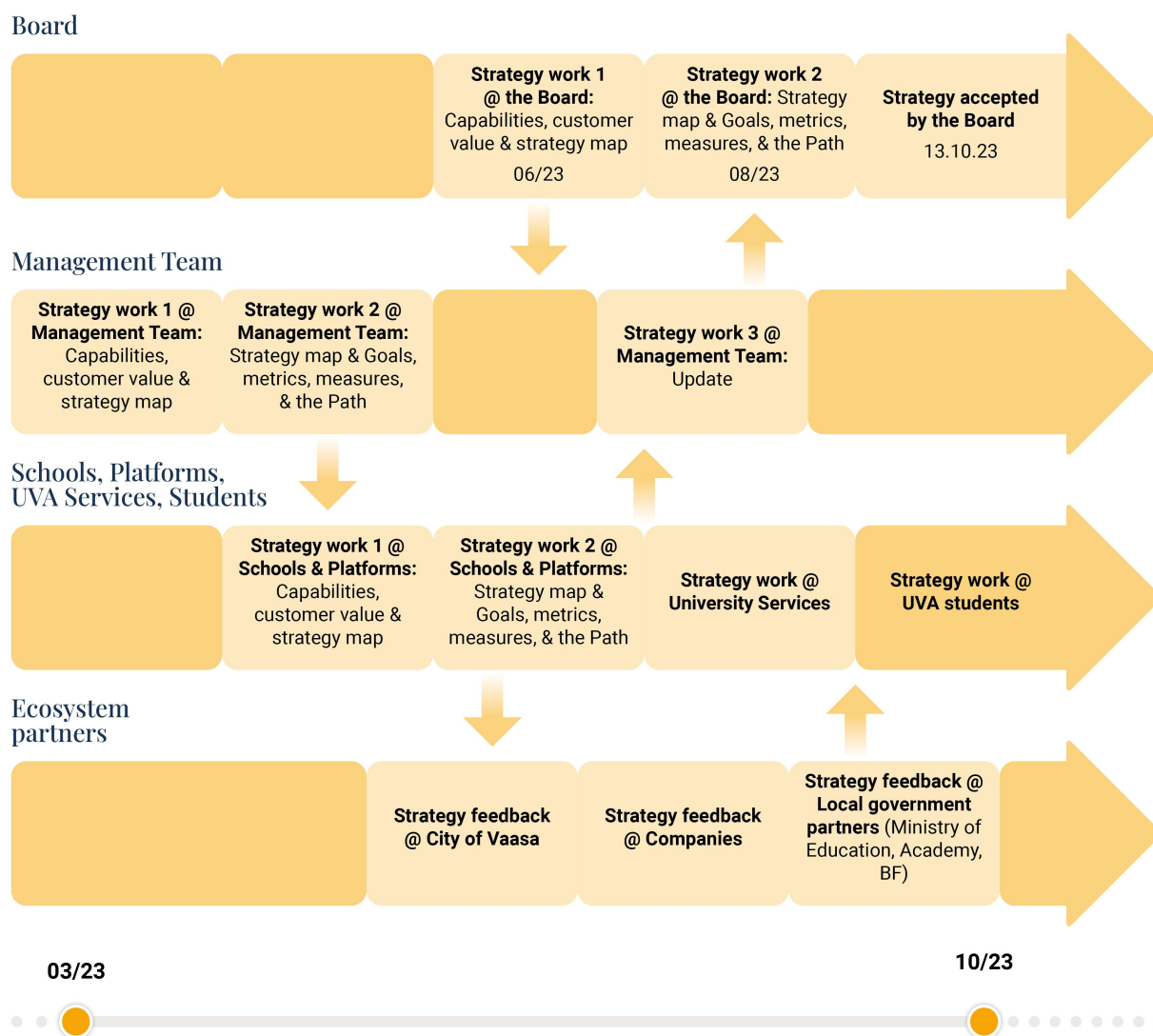


Figure 7. UVA strategy review process (2023)

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
Professors	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