

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

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3.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

Supporting staff competence development

UVA's staff training and competence development are based on the strategy, annual operating and financial planning process, changes in the working environment and the results of the well-being survey. The collaborative planning of competence and well-being actions involves a work community development plan prepared together with employee representatives.

UVA has a [career model](#) with position-specific eligibility and promotion criteria for teaching and research staff that guides faculty development across three different career paths: a tenure track path towards professorship, a path in project and research work, and a teaching-oriented path. Faculty development needs are identified (a) as part of the annual strategy review process between the schools and the rector, and (b) in the evaluation of personal performance and development discussions. All faculty and professional staff receive systematic reviews of their performance as part of their (a) development discussions, and (b) salary reviews. As part of the [Finnish University Salary System \(USS\)](#), grounded in the General collective agreement for universities, both faculty and professional staff are evaluated based on their demand level and personal performance.

UVA encourages staff to participate in courses, seminars and national and international conferences to support their professional development. Internal training covers well-being,

management and leadership, working methods, and communication and language skills (eg., Personnel Training). Besides university-level training, schools reserve an annual budget per faculty member and doctoral researcher for conference travel and competence development. Research Services and the [Graduate School](#) support competence development in research funding, good scientific practice, open science, and project management. Regular Research Cafés offer information and opportunities for discussion on topical issues.

UVA's Support Network for Teaching and Learning ([EDUWASA](#)) enhances the development of teaching skills through consulting, training and co-development. Besides pedagogues, it covers experts in digital teaching and learning, IT experts and mentors within each school. Self-paced online courses on e-teaching and learning are offered in the Howspace virtual environment.

Recruitment

The recruitment principles and eligibility criteria are based on [the University Regulations](#). Open positions are advertised via many channels, including social media as well as academic and field-specific portals. In addition to interviews of applicants, assessment by external experts as well as teaching demonstrations provide further input into the selection process. School-appointed nomination committees handle the selection process for Professor, Research Director and tenure track positions.

Since 2014, UVA has participated in the European Commission's quality program [HR Excellence for researchers \(HRS4R\)](#). It received recognition for its efforts in improving researchers' working conditions and career development in spring 2023. The [Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment \(OTM-R\)](#) section of the programme pays particular attention to practices related to the recruitment of researchers.

Occupational Health and Safety

UVA employs an Occupational Health and Safety Committee tasked with assessing the work environment. It identifies disturbances and make proposals for their remediation. Relevant health and safety trainings (e.g. first aid training) are organised based on the work of the committee.

[Occupational healthcare](#) is provided by [Pihlajalinna](#) and comprises extensive medical care as well as preventive occupational health. Preventive care includes, for instance, workplace surveys and visits assessing working conditions, ergonomical aspects and staff training. Occupational health nurse and physiotherapist services are offered on campus. The occupational health offering also includes work counselling and short-term therapy.

Equality and wellbeing

An [equality plan](#) guides UVA's development activities on promoting gender equality as well as the statutory obligations stated in the non-discrimination act. The aim is to reinforce an equality-

positive atmosphere and effective equality communication among students and personnel of the university.

Actions for the development of [accessibility](#) are summarized in the Accessibility plan.

Regular well-being and pulse surveys (in cooperation with the occupational pension company Varma) are key tools for measuring and promoting wellbeing. The results from the surveys are used in planning and carrying out required unit-specific and university-level wellbeing actions.

UVA adopts a workload allocation model that uses a common formula for how to allocate teaching and supervision based on position, course size and anticipated extent of curriculum renewal.

These are discussed with teachers before being included in their personal work plans.

Contributing to work-life balance, UVA staff benefit from flexible working time arrangements and opportunities for multi-location work. Guidelines for remote work abroad were completed in 2023.

UVA's annual benefit offers vouchers redeemable at sports and culture venues throughout the country. UVA's sports services provide activities, including (but not limited to) a gym, group exercises, tennis, and swimming to staff either free of charge or at a discounted price.

Strengths

Career model that provides transparent expectations for eligibility and promotion along each path

Induction processes and activities supporting the integration of employees and their families arriving from abroad (including Spouse Programme)

Staff benefits and brand new, accessible campus facilities on an attractive seaside campus

Enhancement areas

Follow-up on individual target setting and quality of development discussion dialogue

Updating common rules for multilocation and flexible work

Digitalization of select parts of the induction process to support information flow and socialization