

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

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3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

- Högskolans självvärdering

Quality system supporting the achievement and enhancement of key functions

UVA has a comprehensive quality system covering all core activities: research, research-based education, and sustainable societal impact. The system is an integral part of its management system, which determines the key institutional goals. The annual operating and financial plan process (see 3.1. for details) is the main tool in setting both quantitative and qualitative targets and monitoring their progress. Each member of the UVA community and its bodies are responsible for carrying out the actions needed to reach the targets as they pertain to their specific areas of responsibility (see the [Quality Management](#) site of the university).

UVA carries out systematic risk assessment as part of its annual strategic planning, including maintaining a risk register that is used as part of the annual strategy and budgeting review process (TTS). Financial risk assessment is one core part of the overall risk management process. Financial projections are systematically created that consider different scenarios in state and external funding to assess the potential impact on university operations. As part of the TTS process, the rectors and management group perform an institutional-level (UVA) risk assessment, and the deans perform a school-level risk assessment. This culminates in risks being classified into low/medium/high likelihood of occurring, impact if risk occurred, and severity based on impact and likelihood within a colour-coded risk register. Mitigating actions and responsible

parties are identified for each risk. Risk registers are created around the core activities of: Education, Research, Internationalisation, and Impact and Engagement.

The quality system is regularly evaluated both internally and externally through accreditations, research evaluation exercises and other assessments at multiple levels (institutional, school, programme, research group, services). These processes monitor and enhance the quality covering both KPI's and strategic goals. The system identifies areas of development, allowing UVA to focus on resourcing for growth and quality. The system supports the achievement of objectives set for the core duties and enhances them through resourcing, faculty sufficiency strategy and curriculum management processes.

Evidence speaking to the effectiveness of UVA's quality system is its performance in a variety of international [rankings, accreditations and evaluations](#). For example:

- UVA is ranked third in Finland in 2023 THE World University Rankings (201-250 internationally), as well as the Shanghai Global Ranking of Academic Subjects (18th internationally), for business administration, and received the highest evaluations for citations of any Finnish university.
- UVA is ranked 18th in the Times Higher Education (THE) Small Universities Ranking. Among the Nordic universities, UVA is ranked 4th.
- In the THE Impact Rankings (2024), UVA is ranked 201-300 globally for SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 13: Climate action, and SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions.
- All three of UVA's international masters programmes in business studies have received the maximum 5 years accreditation from EFMD.
- Business studies is pursuing AACSB accreditation (accreditation visit carried out in April 2024), and the University has started the EQUIS accreditation process. Programmes in the School of Technology and Innovations are either ASIIN, EUR-ACE- or Euro-Inf -accredited.
- The most recent annual study by the Finnish Institute for Educational Research put UVA in first place in its university 'fitness test'. The test is based on how the performance of Finnish universities has changed in recent years (2019-2022). The criteria include student applications, graduations, headcount, student/personnel ratio, publications, publications/faculty, and total costs.

Stakeholder participation in the quality system and quality culture

Continuous collaborative efforts with staff, students, and external stakeholders ensure that UVA's activities are continuously enhanced and aligned with the needs of industry, society, and the academic community. UVA fosters a participatory quality culture through active and comprehensive stakeholder involvement and representation, both internal and external, through

a combination of institutional, and programme-level processes and committees. Development needs are identified by the quality system developed during these processes.

UVA values student input. Students provide feedback, participate in decision-making, engage in practical learning, and contribute to programme design and review. Student representatives are consulted about programme management and the student experience, and review the resulting improvement actions annually. UVA is also working on improving student communication and participation through the Jolla online student portal and new tools, such as Annie Advisor. Students also participate in various activities such as student hackathons, competitions, and mentoring.

Strengths

Strong link from the strategy to quality assurance. Systematic use of international standards and experts (evaluations, accreditations) against which to benchmark the UVA quality system and receive developmental feedback

Participatory and inclusive QM processes across core activities and decision-making bodies

Comprehensive and balanced use of internal and external QM assessments

Enhancement areas

Inclusion of all parts of UVA under international (accreditation) standards to help ensure greater harmonization of quality practices and processes

Development of a more sophisticated business intelligence system to track and forecast performance across key indicators, and to facilitate more agile organizational responses

Greater emphasis on the student learning experience and graduate placement, especially among the growing population of international, tuition fee-paying students