

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

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3.4 The HEI's examples of successful enhancement activities

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Working with international accreditations: Adopting international standards as a benchmark and driver of QM

UVA's education strategy is to have all its educational offerings under at least one international accreditation. This started with select international MSc programmes in business studies (EFMD accreditation) and has since encompassed programmes in technology (ASIIN), all programmes at all levels (BSc, MSc, PhD, MBA) in business studies (AACSB), and the next goal is the whole university portfolio (EQUIS) by 2026. These support UVA's QA by adopting international standards, subjecting UVA QA processes to periodical evaluation by international experts, and all involve a multi-stakeholder approach comprising management, faculty, students (and student work), and support services. This has led to the following enhancements:

- UVA's Programme Management Principles have been formulated out of accreditation experiences and have improved all aspects of programme design, delivery, and outcomes.
- Attraction of high-quality partnerships and prestigious university networks internationally
- Instilled a culture of continuous improvement
- Strong positioning in international rankings that support student and faculty attraction

Stakeholder participation in UVA Strategy 2030 improves dialogue and engagement

The University's strategy development process behind its Strategy 2030 incorporated the input of several different key stakeholders throughout 2023, involving faculty, staff, students, the city and industry. Participatory workshops down to research group and service team level involved the whole UVA community.

- The 2023 employee wellbeing survey revealed significant improvements in faculty engagement with and understanding of UVA's strategic plans. Their understanding of UVA's strategic choices improved from 3.1/5.0 in 2021 to 3.9 in 2023.
- UVA has strategic partnership agreements as well as diverse partnerships and forms of cooperation with companies, and has engaged a number of prestigious professionals from this process to sit on the International Advisory Board to help steer UVA towards its 2030 vision.

Continuous improvements to reporting systems to support QM and results orientation

Competitive pressures in higher education, the need for a stronger performance orientation, and the demands of international accreditations and evaluations have all contributed to the need for UVA to enhance its management reporting systems.

As a response, UVA uses Microsoft's Power BI analytics and visualization tool for performance reviews and decision-making based on the latest information. This tool is compatible with several internal data sources (e.g., Excel files, cloud services, local databases), which enables extensive and versatile data utilization. This has produced the following enhancements:

- Reports and metrics are shared with the tool, which promotes collaboration, helps to understand operations better, and improves UVA's ability to track and forecast performance across its key indicators
- Improved UVA's ability to introduce transparent and strategy-aligned target-setting and data-driven decision-making
- Provides UVA with a platform to include progressively more key data into the tool across all its key operations, including future developments that could involve artificial intelligence and more sophisticated business analytics