3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

Practices of quality work and steering go hand in hand

The Quality Policy contains the principles of quality work at UTU and it is available for the UTU community and stakeholders in the Quality Manual, intranet, and UTU webpages. The Steering Group for Quality managed the open preparation of the Quality Policy. The UTU Management Group was involved in the process and the Quality Policy was approved by the UTU Board in March 2022.

The Quality System, steered by the UTU management, consists of practices supporting high-quality activities including academic operational culture, steering, support services, and quality management. The documentation on the quality system is available on the UTU intranet and data systems. For stakeholders, the quality system and the quality procedures are described on the UTU website.
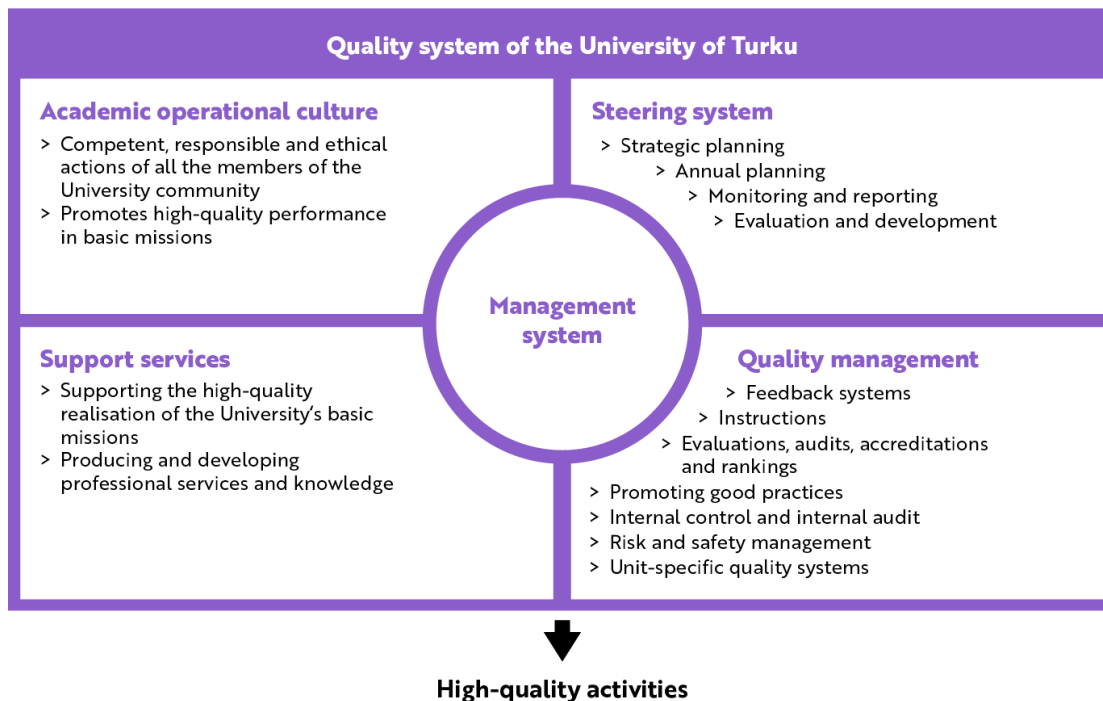
Quality system of the University of Turku

Academic operational culture
> Competent, responsible and ethical actions of all the members of the University community
> Promotes high-quality performance in basic missions

Steering system
> Strategic planning
> Annual planning
> Monitoring and reporting
> Evaluation and development

Management system

Support services
> Supporting the high-quality realisation of the University's basic missions
> Producing and developing professional services and knowledge

Quality management
> Feedback systems
> Instructions
> Evaluations, audits, accreditations and rankings
> Promoting good practices
> Internal control and internal audit
> Risk and safety management
> Unit-specific quality systems

High-quality activities

Figure 14. Practices of quality work as a part of the quality system of UTU

The quality of UTU's activities is ultimately created with the competent, responsible and ethical actions of all the members of the UTU community. It is essential that the practices, support services, and quality management support and enable the personnel and students to use their expertise in full to carry out the basic missions

The Principles of Steering (approved by the Board) defines the UTU's steering system and is based on the PDCA cycle. It includes strategic planning, annual planning, monitoring and reporting, and evaluation and development activities.

UTU community is actively involved in the strategic planning

The Rector is responsible for organising the preparation and revision of the Strategy and the Policy Programme. The whole UTU community is heard extensively in the preparation of the Strategy and the views of alumni and external stakeholders are actively mapped. The preparation process for the Strategy 2030 is presented in figure 15.

Schedule of the Strategic Planning Process

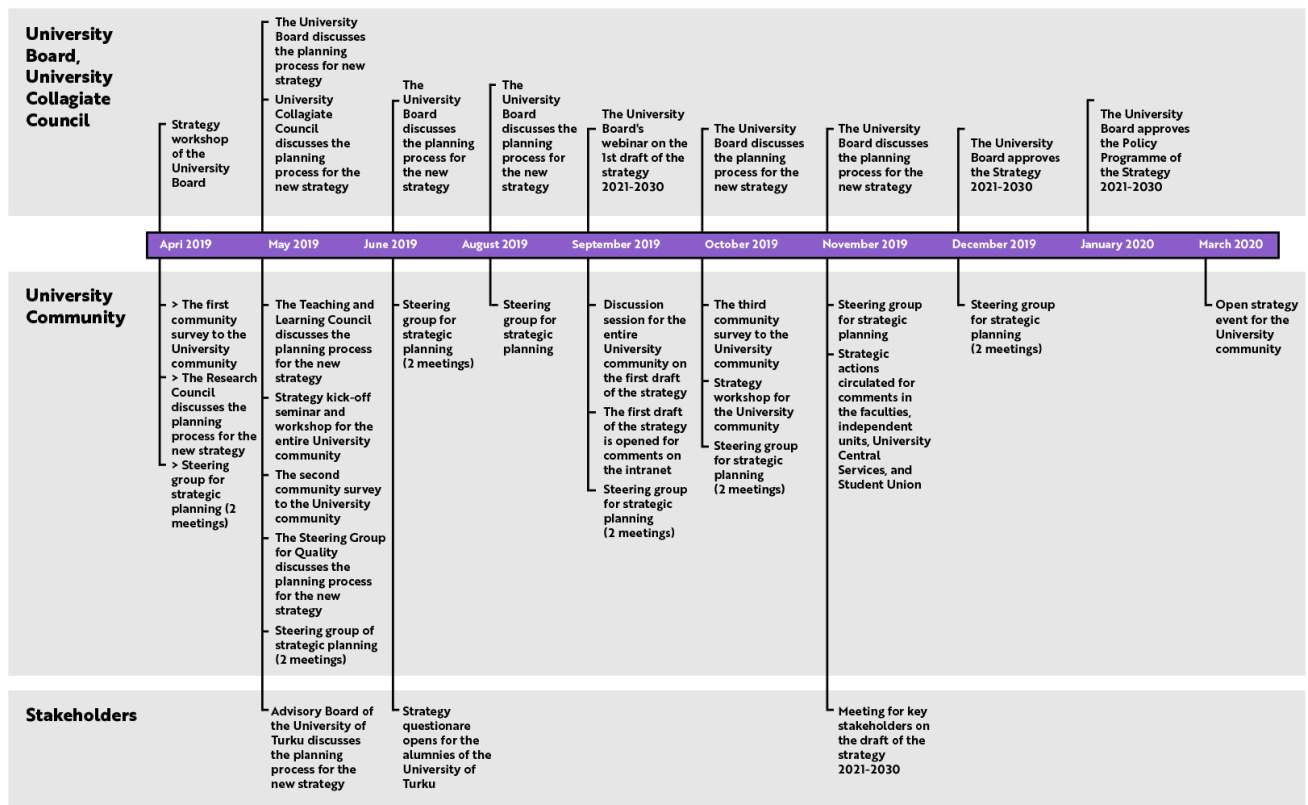|	Apri 2019	May 2019	June 2019	August 2019	September 2019	October 2019	November 2019	December 2019	January 2020	March 2020
University Board, University Collagiate Council	Strategy workshop of the University Board	The University Board discusses the planning process for new strategy; University Collagiate Council discusses the planning process for the new strategy	The University Board discusses the planning process for the new strategy	The University Board discusses the planning process for the new strategy	The University Board's webinar on the 1st draft of the strategy 2021-2030	The University Board discusses the planning process for the new strategy	The University Board discusses the planning process for the new strategy	The University Board approves the Strategy 2021-2030		The University Board approves the Policy Programme of the Strategy 2021-2030
University Community	> The first community survey to the University community > The Research Council discusses the planning process for the new strategy > Steering group for strategic planning (2 meetings)	The Teaching and Learning Council discusses the planning process for the new strategy; Strategy kick-off seminar and workshop for the entire University community; The second community survey to the University community; The Steering Group for Quality discusses the planning process for the new strategy; Steering group of strategic planning (2 meetings)	Steering group for strategic planning (2 meetings)	Steering group for strategic planning	Discussion session for the entire University community on the first draft of the strategy; The first draft of the strategy is opened for comments on the intranet; Steering group for strategic planning (2 meetings)	The third community survey to the University community; Strategy workshop for the University community; Steering group for strategic planning (2 meetings)	Steering group for strategic planning; Strategic actions circulated for comments in the faculties, independent units, University Central Services, and Student Union	Steering group for strategic planning (2 meetings)		Open strategy event for the University community
Stakeholders		Advisory Board of the University of Turku discusses the planning process for the new strategy	Strategy questionare opens for the alumnies of the University of Turku				Meeting for key stakeholders on the draft of the strategy 2021-2030			

Figure 15. Preparation process for the strategy 2021-2030 in UTU

The UTU management and Strategic Planning unit monitors the implementation of the Strategy regularly and reports the implementation to the UTU Board annually. The Policy Programme is regularly followed up on the operational level in faculties and departments. The dean is responsible for implementing the strategy in the faculty and the head of department in the department or corresponding unit. The steering groups and councils promote the implementation of the Strategy and Policy Programme, support the flow of information, and direct and monitor the UTU's central activities and the quality of operations. The Strategy is updated if needed according to the changes in the operational environment. The Strategic Planning unit, led by the Director of Strategic Planning, coordinates both the strategy process and the quality work practices, which supports the complementary functions of steering and quality.
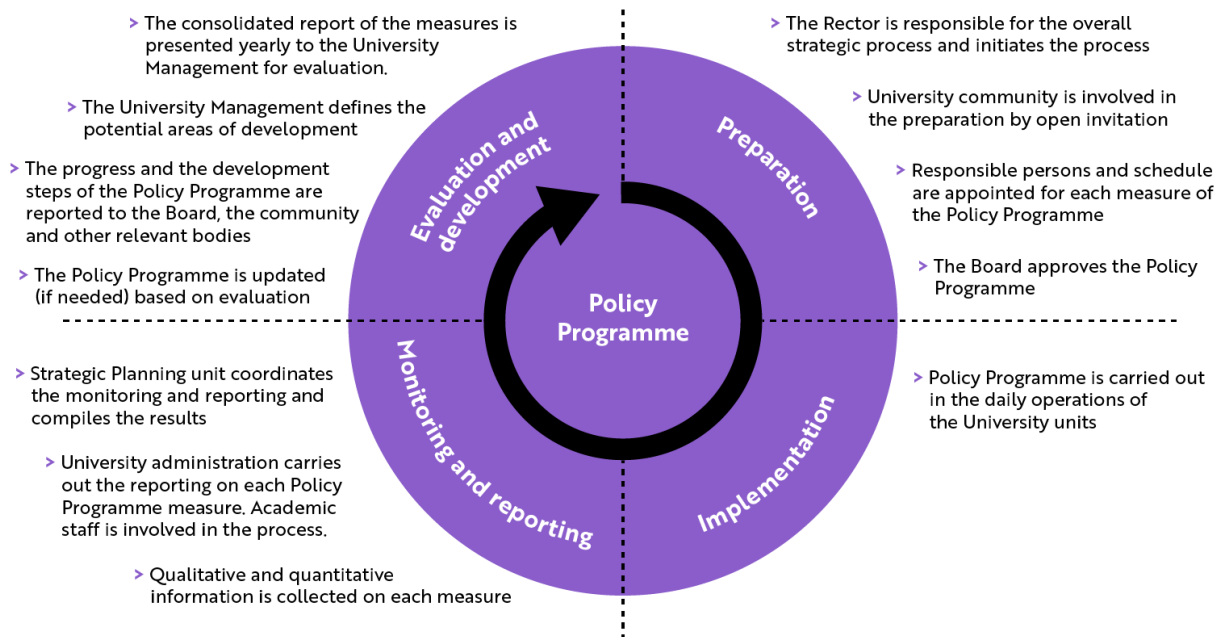
The consolidated report of the measures is presented yearly to the University Management for evaluation.

The University Management defines the potential areas of development

The progress and the development steps of the Policy Programme are reported to the Board, the community and other relevant bodies

The Policy Programme is updated (if needed) based on evaluation

Strategic Planning unit coordinates the monitoring and reporting and compiles the results

University administration carries out the reporting on each Policy Programme measure. Academic staff is involved in the process.

Qualitative and quantitative information is collected on each measure

The Rector is responsible for the overall strategic process and initiates the process

University community is involved in the preparation by open invitation

Responsible persons and schedule are appointed for each measure of the Policy Programme

The Board approves the Policy Programme

Policy Programme is carried out in the daily operations of the University units

Evaluation and development

Preparation

Monitoring and reporting

Implementation

Policy Programme

Figure 16. Policy programme follows the PDCA cycle

The strategic profiles in the UTU Strategy implement and advance multidisciplinary research and education in UTU Community. The profiles are reported yearly to UTU management. In addition, the Rector provides strategic funding every three years to strategically relevant research and education projects. The progress of the strategic funding activities is reported in the annual reports of the units and evaluated in the annual target negotiations held with the UTU management.

Annual planning follows the structure of the UTU strategy

The annual planning process is an important part of the steering system including all levels and units of UTU. The annual plan consists of the operational, personnel and financial plans. The operational plan follows the structure of UTU's Strategy and it describes the main activities and areas of development of the units.

The unit's activities of the previous year are reported in the annual report. The report follows the structure of the annual plan and it analyses the realisation of the planned activities. The annual reports of the units are utilised as information sources in monitoring the realisation of the UTU's Strategy. The UTU management holds annual target negotiations with the faculties and independent units on the basis of the annual plans and reports. The management gives the faculties and independent units feedback based on the negotiations.

The feedback and monitoring systems of basic missions and support services are used as a part of the quality management. Activities are developed on the basis of feedback and the person giving the feedback is informed of the development based on the feedback.
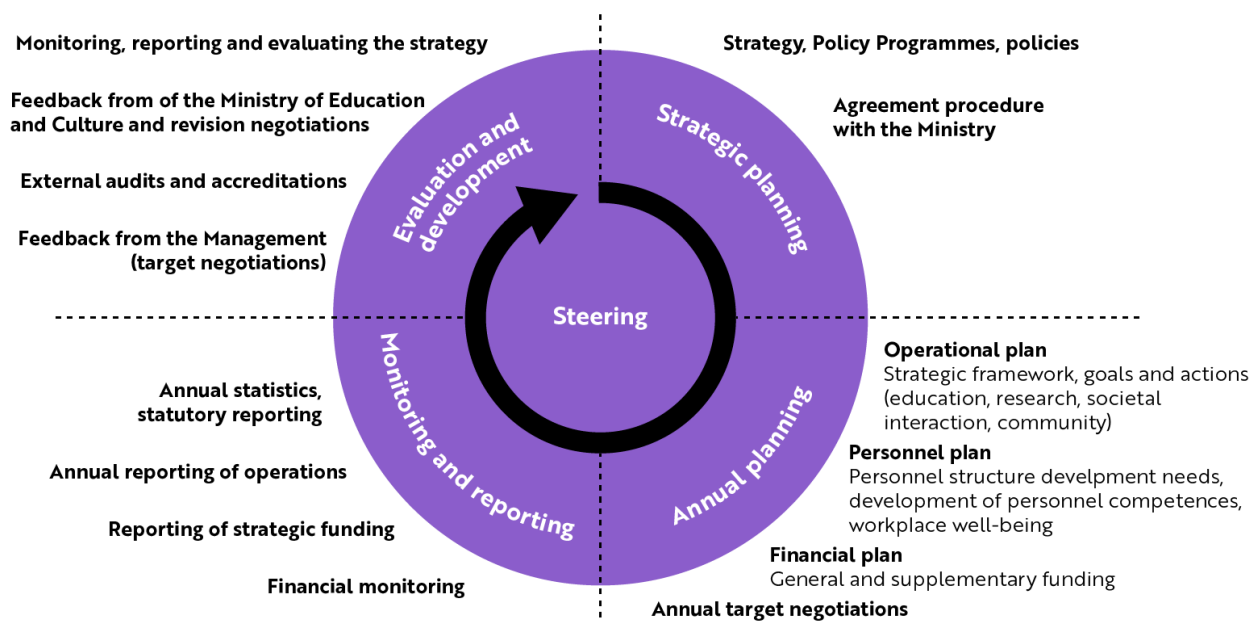
Figure 17. The principles of steering at UTU

Maintaining a common knowledge base is an important part of strategic and quality management. The produced and analysed knowledge includes internal and external data and information (Figure 18). With this knowledge, UTU intends to ensure an increase in the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of its operations, focusing on supporting decision-making and management.

The importance of strategic foresight work is recognised and this work is supported by a newly established development project in knowledge-based management organised in the Strategic Planning unit. The Vice Rector for partnerships and strategic engagement acts as the chair of the steering group for this project.

KNOWLEDGE-BASED MANAGEMENT

FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY
> Units' annual plans and annual reports
> Monitoring Strategy's Policy Programme

INDICATOR INFORMATION
> Education (e.g. degrees, student count, credits)
> Research (e.g. publications, research funding)
> Personnel (e.g. Full-Time Equivalents)

FEEDBACK INFORMATION
> Student feedback (e.g. course feedback, Bachelor's degree feedback)
> Workplace well-being surveys, workplace surveys
> Assessments and accreditations

PARTNERSHIP INFORMATION
> Information from CRM system
> Collaboration agreements

FINANCIAL INFORMATION
> Financial reports
> Financial statement information
> Information about facilities

PERSONNEL INFORMATION
> Personnel competence
> Allocation of working hours
> Absences due to sickness

FORESIGHT INFORMATION
> Operational environment analysis
> Mega trends, weak signals
> Competence need mapping/survey

Information contains University's internal information and also comparative information from other universities and organisations (for example Vipunen) when possible.

Figure 18 Examples of information used in knowledge-based management

The UTU Community is actively involved in the strategy process among other steering processes which supports the link between the everyday work and the UTU Strategy. The onboarding for the new members of UTU includes introduction to the strategy process and quality work (onboarding roadmap available on the intranet).

Strengths	Enhancement areas
Quality and strategy work are based on the Strategic Planning unit which supports their complementary functions	Development of knowledge-based management
Open and participatory strategy preparation process in UTU community	Development and usage of strategic foresight information
Strong connection between University's strategic planning and annual planning	Increasing the effectiveness of the actions in the Policy Programme

3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

- Auditointiryhmän arvio

Quality management is closely linked with UTU's strategic management

The University of Turku's quality policy is public and forms a solid basis for the quality system. The quality policy is available on the University's website. The quality policy emphasises the importance of university culture, purposeful management, competent support services and structured quality management in the University's activities. According to the audit visit, the quality policy guides UTU's activities and reflects compliance with its objectives at various levels of the University. In the big picture, the quality system supports UTU's profile.

The preparation process for Strategy 2030 in 2019–2020 was highly participatory. It included several stages where the University Board, the University community and external stakeholders could engage and comment on the draft strategy. The audit showed that the participatory strategy process had resulted in excellent community engagement around shared objectives. During the audit visit, the different groups interviewed identified the strategic objectives and their role in taking them forward. The audit team, therefore, concludes that UTU staff recognises the connection between their work and the HEI's strategy.

The strategy has also given a boost to six policy programmes that realise the strategic emphases: Digitalisation Programme, Personnel Policy, International Programme, Equality Plan, Cultural Policy and Language Policy.

On the other hand, the participatory strategy process generated many perspectives, many of which were incorporated into the strategy. As a result, the University's strategic portfolio consists of 91 policy actions, which the audit team considers a very large number. The audit visit revealed that UTU is in the process of prioritising the strategy. According to University management, all units do not intend to use all 91 instruments. Instead, the units can prioritise areas that need the most development. The audit team strongly supports strategic focusing and prioritising.

The University of Turku's quality and steering systems are closely linked. The document titled The Principles of Steering clearly describes how the University's management system is based on the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) framework for continuous improvement. The management system comprises strategic planning, annual planning, monitoring, reporting, evaluation and development activities. UTU has strengthened the link between management and quality assurance by recently establishing its the Unit of Strategic Planning responsible for coordinating the strategy process and quality system.

More coherence across faculties is encouraged in strategy execution

The implementation and monitoring of UTU's Strategy 2030 is being promoted in various ways at different levels. It was evident from the interviews that the deans promote implementing the strategy in the faculty and the heads of department in their units. Furthermore, the university-level management, steering groups and various councils are essential in advancing and promoting strategic foci in UTU's core duties and support services. The Board monitors the

implementation of the strategy on an ongoing basis, especially in the context of financial decisions.

The annual planning processes ensure that the strategy's objectives are translated into action at the unit level. In annual reports, the units assess the previous year's performance and set targets for the following year. Based on the annual plans and reports, UTU management holds annual target negotiations with the faculties and independent units. The management gives the faculties and independent units feedback based on the negotiations. The annual reports, statistics and other reports serve as a basis for the monitoring reports.

In general, there is good cooperation between the University's faculties. However, there is ample space for improvement in furthering cooperation in the strategy's execution. The audit visit raised the issue of UTU's internal funding model and the Rectorate's opportunities to lead faculties in developing multidisciplinarity. Interviews revealed that the internal funding model does not sufficiently promote cross-faculty research. In addition, there is little internal strategic funding available to faculties. The University of Turku's top management considered external infrastructure funding available from the Academy of Finland every second year and its allocation to multidisciplinary research as an important solution. The University's management also stressed the competence of UTU leaders and the ability to create funding possibilities within the University's internal and external funding mechanisms.

The Management Group, services and leaders are assessing the achievement of the strategy's objectives. The Strategic Planning Unit monitors the implementation of the strategy regularly and reports the implementation to the UTU Board annually. The Strategic Planning Unit recently conducted a stocktaking of the 91 actions and was consequently able to indicate by a traffic light system (red, yellow, green) how these are proceeding.

UTU should strengthen its strategic planning to become more evidence-based

The information generated by the quality system is used in the management of the University. Planning, monitoring and reporting are carried out in the Steering Management System (SMS), which a UTU Data Warehouse supports.

Based on the self-assessment report and the audit visit, the University of Turku wants to strengthen its knowledge-based management and information systems. The audit visit revealed that faculties and departments strongly need up-to-date data and indicator information to support their management. In line with the area for improvement identified by UTU in its self-assessment report, the audit team recommends that UTU strengthen its strategic planning to become more evidence-based, data-driven and transparent.

The University has launched a knowledge-based management project. The project has four phases: first, user needs were identified, then data was transferred into a user-friendly and

dynamic format using the Power BI system. The third phase is putting information into practice to use data in decision-making. The fourth phase evaluates the system's performance and ensures its effectiveness in developing activities. The knowledge-based management project has already progressed to the second and third phases of Power BI data production and its use in decision-making. The audit team encourages UTU to complete the knowledge-based management project and fully integrate it into UTU's management. In this project, UTU will also benchmark other Finnish universities, which the audit team endorses and finds useful.