3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

- Högskolans självvärdering

The UO's strategic management, operations management and quality system form an integral entity. The quality system supports the attainment of the objectives set for the UO's operation and enables strategic management and strategy-based operations management in keeping with the principle of continuous improvement. The principles of the quality system are applied in the strategic management as a part of planning, steering and follow-up processes according to the division of responsibilities.

Division of Responsibilities and Organisational Structures

The effective functioning of the UO's strategic management is ensured by defining managerial responsibilities. As regards the UO's strategic management, the central responsibilities are manifested as responsibilities in strategic planning, strategy implementation and the follow-up of the strategic activities. The roles and responsibilities for strategic management are described in the university regulations and the principles of operations management.

The administrative bodies of the UO also have certain responsibilities, duties, and roles in enhancing the UO's strategic management. For example, the management groups and councils led by Vice-Rectors connect the university-level and unit-level strategic management, and thus have a key role in supporting strategic management throughout the organisation. Besides the roles and responsibilities based on the UO's management system, the strategic management of the UO is also supported by the organisational structures which transcend the faculty-based organisational boundaries enhancing the planning and implementation of activities and

evaluation-based development. The multidisciplinary focus institutes have a key role in supporting the strategic development of research activities in this respect.

Implementation of the Strategy and Operational Planning

The connection between the quality system and strategic management is fulfilled considerably through the practices of internal planning and steering. The UO's strategy is implemented through the strategic development programmes which are prepared for the UO's core activities and other priority areas selected by the Board for each strategy period. The implementation is conducted by predefined processes and practices of annual planning defined in the principles of operations management. The implementation of the strategy is also supported by the annual faculty-specific target and performance negotiations as part of the annual planning cycle. Furthermore, the strategic planning process is backed up by kick-off events for annual planning and other types of communication between the UO management and the units.

A broader background to the annual planning of strategy implementation is provided in the long-range planning process, which focuses on the results, resources, and risks of the core activities with five-year scope. Both the practices for the annual planning of strategy implementation and long-range planning are put in place to support the effectiveness and coherence of the strategic management. In general, the UO's quality system has predefined process for strategic planning and implementation in place. However, strategic planning could be still improved by making the unit-level strategy process more consistent throughout the organisation.

Applying follow-up information to strategic management

One of the quality system's key tasks is to produce information for the needs of strategic and operations management. The follow-up information is utilised in several ways in the UO. From the perspective of strategic management, the core of the follow-up information lies in the indicators defined for each of the strategic key areas. The follow-up information on strategic focus areas is monitored according to the UO's management system and managerial responsibilities. The University Board is provided regularly with the indicator data describing the core activities of the UO development. Furthermore, a broader review of the results and key activities in the UO's strategic key areas is conducted by the Board as a part of the annual cycle of strategic management. Tailored indicator data on the operation is also produced for the needs of strategic and operations management. For instance, the UO management is regularly provided with different analyses and reports related to topical issues in strategic management. The information produced by the UO's quality system has also been utilised in the strategy workshops of the University Board and the UO management.

Besides the follow-up indicators of the core strategic areas, there are also several follow-up reports which are utilised in strategic management. For instance, an indicator set has been developed and deployed for the profiling areas of the UO's research and the research projects included in the areas to follow the overall performance of the areas and projects. Similarly, the

performance of the research projects supported by strategic funding under the focus institutes is followed regularly by the indicator set developed for this specific purpose. The follow-up of these projects and activities consists of final reporting covering the whole four-year project period and yearly reporting focusing on the key performance indicators defined for this follow-up purpose. Furthermore, the follow-up data on the usage of the UO's research infrastructures are utilised in strategic management, for example, by incorporating the information provided in this follow-up to the analysis of research activities at the unit-level.

The key indicators following the performance of core activities and attainment of strategic objectives are presented in the UO's reporting portal for the actors with managerial responsibilities. Besides the information presented in the UO's reporting portal, part of the strategic follow-up information is also distributed in separate reports and documents. The information provided in the reporting portal and by other channels is utilised in the management of daily activities.

The UO's strategic management is also bolstered by applying evaluative information. For instance, the UO has established procedures for conducting a research assessment exercise (RAE) and applying the results of this evaluation in both strategic and operational development of activities. Research evaluations are used also as a tool for directing strategic funding to research focus areas and areas in need of development. This is carried out under the multidisciplinary focus institutes that coordinate the focus areas of the UO's research. This evaluative practice has also an established role in developing research activities and supporting both strategic spearhead projects and emerging research themes in the UO.

The UO has developed its capability to respond to the changes in operation environment by conducting foresight projects both at the university and at the faculty level. For example, the ongoing strategic development programme for education was preceded by a foresight project focusing on the digitalisation of education. Furthermore, the strategic management and strategic awareness of the UO have been enhanced by incorporating environment analysis approaches to management practices.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
The organisational structure supports the implementation of the strategy.	Strategic planning could be more consistent.
Planning and implementation of multidisciplinary research in focus institutes and through projects in profiling research areas.	Coverage of follow-up reporting could still be developed.
The university-wide graduate school supports the development of doctoral education.	The utilisation of follow-up information could still be improved.