KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OULU

Tekijät **Kerstin Norén, Guðrún Geirsdóttir, Damon Mohebbi, Siamäk Naghian, Hilla Vuori & Mira Huusko, University of Oulu self-assessment (eds.) Johanna Bluemink & Johanna Flyktman**
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3.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

A skilful, renewing, diverse and international community

The development of personnel skills and well-being is led by the UO strategy and its development programmes. The goal is to achieve well-being and an actively developing personnel with the best possible professional and work community capabilities to perform their duties. With personnel planning, we anticipate longer-term renewal needs. The orientation and internal training courses aim to consider the changing needs of work community.

The personnel’s individual competence needs are identified as part of performance, well-being, and competence management in connection with the annual development discussion round. In addition to planning at the individual level, the UO’s units create competence development and well-being development plans annually in connection with financial and operational planning. These are also used in the planning of the UO personnel training package as part of the development plan for the working community.

The focus of multidisciplinary competence development in the UO is on needs-based training and on the development of discipline-independent readiness skills, leadership, management, and pedagogical competence.

At the individual level, the development of competence is largely dependent on a person’s own

initiative. As a result, the challenge of competence development is inequality. In addition to individual responsibility, we strive to develop more effective mechanisms to support the identification of needed skills. According to the well-being survey, the staff's experience in utilising their own skills is very high. High-quality leadership plays an extremely important role in this. In addition, HR services are organised to support the development of skills and well-being through specialised teams.

Work well-being

At the UO, well-being is viewed holistically, so that work supports well-being when it only burdens you appropriately, and recovery is possible both at work and in your free time. Work must also contain restorative elements and it should be a source of resources, for example, in situations that challenge mental health.

The well-being and good everyday life of the personnel are also promoted with solutions that support the reconciliation of work and other life and by building a family-friendly operating culture together. By supporting the well-being of the personnel, we aim to maintain and support the ability to work, considering the different stages of the life cycle of the employment relationship. In well-being support, the focus is on prevention. The employee's ability to work is supported both proactively and reactively in situations where there is a possibility of a decrease in the ability to work.

Well-being is monitored with well-being surveys, development discussions and focused workplace assessments. The UO uses a three-step support model for handling results from a well-being survey, where the line manager analyses the results of the survey and draws up a development plan together with the unit staff. The unit implements agreed measures, if necessary, utilising HR and external support services. The line manager's responsibility also includes monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the measures and communicating the needs of the unit to the HR manager to develop services. With the help of the results of the surveys and the measures derived from them, the units and the UO operate more systematically and effectively.

The status of grant researchers has been developed as part of the UO community. The UO has been awarded HR Excellence in Research by the European Commission for the development of personnel practices for researchers.

High-quality leadership is seen as a key factor in promoting the well-being of the personnel. Common practices and operating principles help to solve career-related challenges. Through competence development, the personnel have a better ability to take care of their own well-being even in a changing environment. The entire work community participates in supporting work ability and well-being through its activities and practices.

Versatile well-being services and benefits are available to the UO personnel and line managers, which has been promoted by assembling them into a well-being toolkit for line managers.

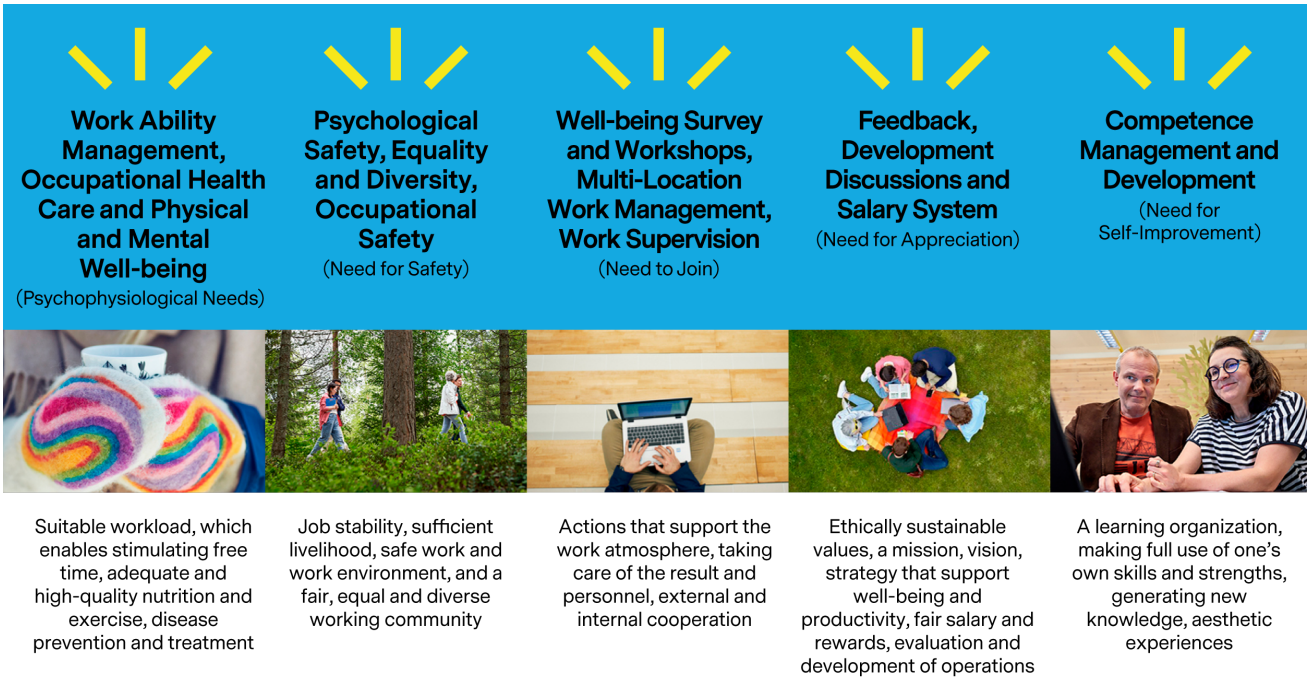

Figure 11. Service and support themes for line managers to manage work ability and well-being.

Staff well-being is challenged by insufficient overall understanding of the elements that support well-being and work ability, as well as the knowledge of the tools and services that support them. In particular, the insufficient management of workloads and other psychosocial factors is reflected in the number of absences due to mental health reasons. The goal is to increase both awareness of mental health and services that support mental health.

High-quality leadership and management

Currently, the personnel's well-being is supported by paying attention to high-quality management and managing psychosocial stress. Expectations for good management and leadership are defined in the UO leadership principles, which are in line with the UO values. Leadership principles are included also in leadership training as well as in evaluations. Leadership and line management training (including the science leadership training) are implemented annually.

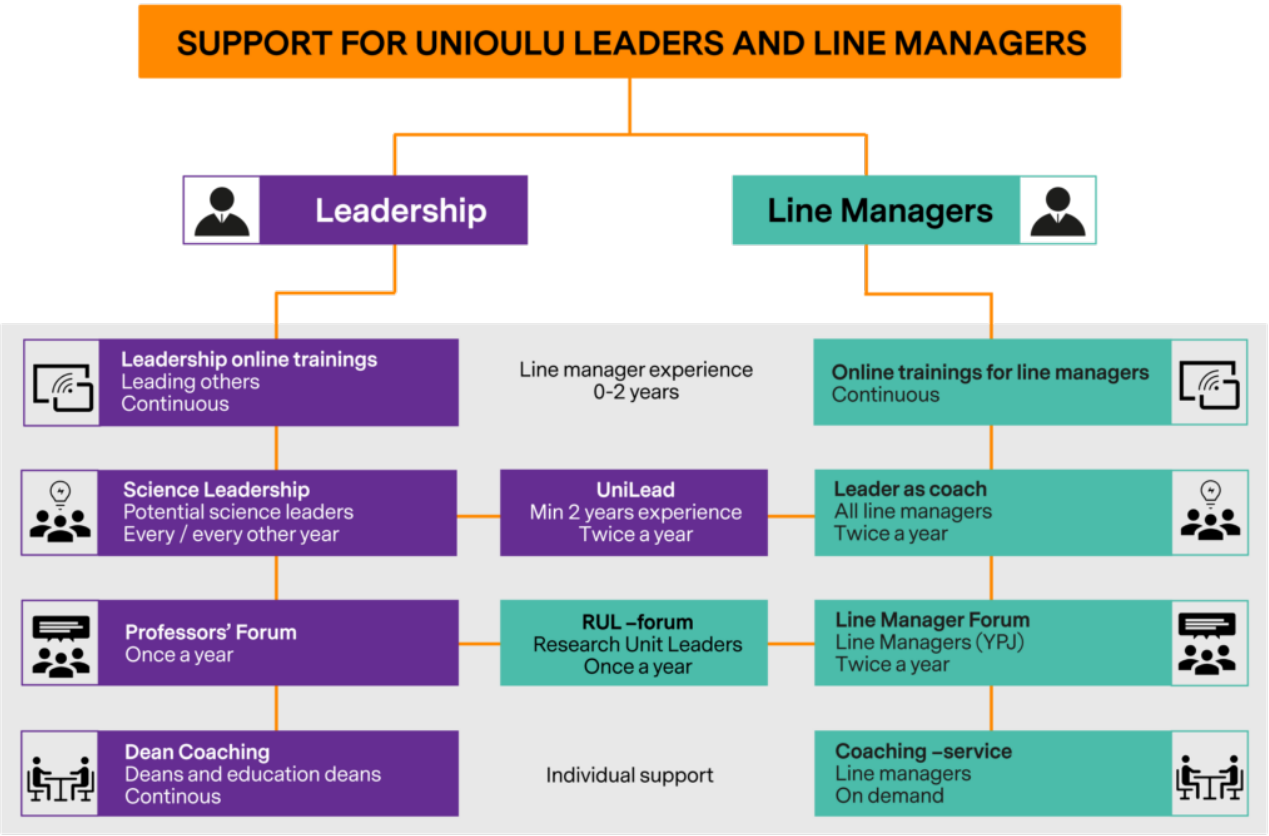

Figure 12. Coaching programmes for line managers and leaders.

The line managers are supported actively in different ways. The aim is to promote the effectiveness and utilisation of diverse forms of support. In addition to the entire staff, the UO supports the well-being of management teams, leaders, and managers in particular, so that the well-being of the entire organisation improves through high-quality leadership. The readiness and know-how of change management has also been increased at the UO.

Equality and non-discrimination

The UO fosters diversity and works resolutely to promote equality. The objective of the work on equality and diversity carried out in the UO is to promote the equal and non-discriminative treatment of employees and students as well as to prevent discrimination and address any flaws. Every member of the UO community is encouraged to promote equality and non-discrimination through their own activities.

In the UO strategy, we are committed to promoting the UN's sustainable development goals through research, education, social interaction, and campus development. The UN's sustainable development goals also include the goals of personnel equality and equity. The measures in the Equality and Diversity Plan also guide our work in promoting an equal and non-discriminative working life. An accessibility plan has been added as an appendix to the Equality and Diversity Plan at the end of 2022. Equality, non-discrimination, and accessibility aspects are taken into account in all activities related to personnel, such as leadership, management, decision-making

and work community activities. This is the goal that the UO is working towards, and to achieve this the UO staff awareness of digital accessibility must be further increased. The UO is one of the first HEI's in Finland to hire a DEI expert.

Bullying and harassment are not accepted in the UO community, and work to promote equality and non-discrimination is done determinedly.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
Leadership programmes and line manager support.	The aim is to develop the entirety of management feedback and evaluation practices into a quality system.
Skills development opportunities.	Developing the identification of skills development needs and reducing information fragmentation.
Unit-specific competence development and well-being plans are drawn up in operational planning.	Understanding work ability management in the organisation and monitoring its effectiveness.
Operating model for utilising the results of occupational health and well-being surveys.	Workload and its management.
An open and transparent recruitment process and guidelines, as well as HR support staff appointed for recruitment, the new recruitment system supports good practices.	Further development in the new system regarding the transparency of direct recruitment.

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

- Auditointiryhmän arvio

Long-term development of line management is evident

According to the audit visit, the Community well-being concept is taken seriously all over the university. Staff members are proud to work at the university with their colleagues, students, and external partners. There are a lot of well-being benefits for staff and practices that promote well-being, for example wide occupational health care including several mental health services, an early support model, employee bicycle benefit, sport and culture benefits. In every faculty, there is an HR manager who supports well-being leadership, and in some faculties there are additional well-being committees or promoters who organise well-being workshops, activities, sports events and activities for families and children. One faculty has established a well-being committee and decided to be the happiest faculty in the world.

A staff well-being survey is carried out at the University of Oulu every other year. Based on the results of the survey, university-level measures are incorporated in the action plan for work-

ability management. About two thirds of the staff answer these surveys. Comparing the results from 2021 and 2023, the audit team found that the work ability of the staff had decreased. The audit team recommends that the management and the HR unit keep an extra eye on the well-being of staff, also the third of them who did not answer the well-being survey. There are also signs in the well-being survey results from 2021-2023 that contacts between management and staff have diminished during these past two years. The audit team recommends paying attention to this. The audit team also recommends the university to ensure that the guidelines and forms for development discussions on Patio are used across the university. In addition to the yearly development discussion between members of staff and their line managers, there could be more contact between management and staff in connection with the updated strategy's goals.

According to the interviews and teacher workshops, line management work at the university has developed remarkably during the last 20 years, with roles and responsibilities clarified. HR supports line managers and training is offered for them. The audit team also notes that the Oulu Science Leadership programme earns to grow and be spread also nationally and internationally.

According to the self-assessment report and the teacher workshop, a heavy workload is a problem recognised at the university. To recommend a solution to this is far beyond the realm of the audit team, but it should become a theme for national and international discussions with other universities. As a member of the European University Association (EUA) the university can lead the way in this huge well-being issue.

Recruitment and equality procedures are in place

The University of Oulu uses a clear procedure for staff recruitment. The procedure has recently been strengthened with a new recruitment system. The recruitment guidelines are aligned with the EU Commission's Open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment principles (OTM-R). In the recruitment of senior positions and tenure track positions there are always external evaluators involved. The university has an ambition to recruit more international staff. However, 21 % of staff are already international. There is a special guide for international staff on practical issues. According to the audit visit, many of the applicants are internal candidates from the UO. The audit team encourages the university to continue its efforts to attract more national and international talent. One aspect of this is making job descriptions broad enough.

According to the university's website, the university has put in place systematic procedures to address diversity, inclusion, and equality. The university has an Equality and Diversity Committee, which among other things organises morning coffees to discuss these issues. The university has started to work even harder on undesirable power structures. In addition, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) expert was recruited and began work at the UO in the beginning of 2023. Actions to promote equality and diversity are publicly outlined and highlighted by the university. The university's Equality and diversity plan is based on the National Equality Act and the Non-Discrimination Act. The university specifies that people must be treated equally

to support well-being in the community, create a sense of inclusion for staff and students, and take care of the social and physical environment. The Equality and diversity plan includes development actions for a two-year period at a time. According to the audit visit, the UNIC cooperation has considered acting on diversity beyond nationality, language, religion, or sexual orientation.

Competence development needs should be further explored

According to the audit visit, the University of Oulu has plans and systematic processes for the competence development of staff in place. The trainings are available in the OSKU system. The Faculty of Education and Psychology provides pedagogical training for all university staff. There is an overarching pedagogical strategy, a Moodle platform, digital pedagogical training, and tutor training for tutors. Recruited teachers need to have pedagogical training completed within two years and completion of these studies is monitored in annual development discussions. According to the audit visit, the University of Oulu does not require their staff to have pedagogical training in the tenure track process.

According to the self-assessment report and the audit visit, it is up to the individual staff member to decide how actively they participate in the development of competence. Individual development discussions between members of staff and their line managers once a year should not be the only way to ensure the competence development needs either for the staff member or for the university and its activities. The audit team recommends that more attention should also be paid to the staff's internationalisation competences, multicultural competences, and language awareness. The audit team recommends that the competence development needs of the staff should be more closely examined. For example, competence development should be organised in strategic areas where more staff are interested to participate and where development needs exist.