

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OULU

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3.4 The HEI's examples of successful enhancement activities

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

Promotion of multi- and interdisciplinarity

The decisive promotion of multi- and interdisciplinarity has supported new research initiatives and increased funding as well as enhanced dialogue between researchers from different fields and added to the scientific competence of researchers. Strategic alignment of for example the profiling of the university and the research of focus institutes have produced excellent multi- and interdisciplinary research themes and projects that have succeeded in both funding calls and top international recruitments. Multidisciplinary events, such as the Brown Bag Lunch seminars and UniOulu Science Day, have brought together researchers across disciplinary borders and facilitated discussions thematically, for example, so that all researchers interested in similar topics have been welcome to join and bring forth their own expertise. This has created new connections and started new research ideas between researchers coming from fields that would not normally come together in their everyday work. The scientific competence of doctoral researchers as well as doctors has been increased on courses, where they have had the opportunity to learn skills and knowledge that multi- and interdisciplinary research and collaboration require. Improved competence supports multi- and interdisciplinary research in the future and improves its quality. The action to promote multi- and interdisciplinarity have also created bridges between different projects and institutes, which supports the collaboration of multidisciplinary actors of our university, thus making the use of resources more efficient.

Strengthening of internationalisation

Talent Boost—an internationalisation programme for Finnish higher education institutions—provides an unprecedented opportunity for the University of Oulu to implement an ambitious action plan in 2021–2024 focusing on the attraction, retention and employment of international talent and their family members. Within the Talent Boost programme, the development of increasingly seamless support services for international students and recruited experts is being explored through paths which allow the consideration of customer experience and bring added value to standard services across the largely process-driven university. The paths begin with attraction and recruitment the lead to application and admission and continue with orientation and onboarding. Integration and guidance are then followed by networking and career services and finally retention and life in Oulu. Importantly, during the latest development work, stakeholders' perspectives and concerns have been identified and mapped in workshops and through surveys leading to prioritised development initiatives and pilots. In parallel, the concept of the university community has been expanded to also include family members of international staff as well as visiting researchers thus strengthening inclusiveness and the sense of belonging. Integration and wellbeing have also been bolstered with new types of advisory and guidance services, new community events, new training supporting integration in Finland and in working life, and for instance with the launching of the University of Oulu Spouse Network. The composition of the Talent Boost team, including 26 experts from five services units (Unit for Strategy and Science Policy, Academic Affairs, HR, Extension School, and Communications, Marketing and Public Affairs) is a key to the successful creation and upscaling of services for an increasingly international community.

Leadership development

The University of Oulu Science Leadership programme was developed based on the idea that post doc researchers could benefit from leadership training in the career phase, when they are developing from being individual researchers to becoming young group leaders. The pilot programme was implemented in 2018. After the pilot, programmes have been implemented annually and by now altogether more than 70 post doc researchers have participated in the programme. The most recent programme started in April 2023. The year-long programme is unique in the context of higher education in Finland and includes three main pillars 1) science leadership, 2) impactful research communication and 3) interdisciplinary collaboration. The main goal of the programme is to strengthen the participants' knowledge, abilities, and skills in all these pillars, which are considered important areas for academic leaders. The programme prepares the participants for their future role as science leaders: the participants are better prepared to take over the role and seek support to succeed in this role later as well. In the long term, the programme will improve the quality of leadership and the leadership culture at the University of Oulu, as more researchers will find the leadership role attractive and are better equipped to succeed in this role.

UNIC—European University of Post-Industrial Cities

The UO is a member of European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC) network that started its operations in October 2020. UNIC is one of the main strategic cooperation networks for the University of Oulu. Within the UNIC network the partner universities and cities are aiming towards +10 years of strong collaboration and development in education, research, and societal impact. During first three years of UNIC the universities have started to build two joint degree programmes, a MOOC course, arranged spring and summer schools, opened over 300 virtual course offering platform, published a handbook on physical and virtual mobility, arranged several teacher training courses and seminars, created a joint research strategy and roadmaps and organised multiple [CityLab events](#) where students, researchers, city representatives and other stakeholders collaboratively identify the challenges of the post-industrial cities and co-create solutions to these challenges. UNIC has brought new ways of achieving mobility and networking opportunities not only to students but to teachers, researchers, and staff. In addition to the education collaboration and CityLab activities superdiversity and the enhancement of diversity are core concepts and goals within UNIC. The partners have conducted a state-of-the-art report on superdiversity in higher education and a peer review on superdiversity practices in the partner universities. After the first peer review conducted in spring 2021 the UO learnt about the strengths and development areas in diversity practices, and it was noted that all the partner universities have diversity officers or specialists. The first diversity, equity and inclusion specialist started working at the UO at the beginning of the year 2023. The role is to develop the university's operations so that students and staff can feel equal and be a part of the community. UNIC collaboration accelerates the strategic development of the UO and can be seen as one of the flagships and launchpad to pilot new ideas and to reach out the development goals of the university.

University Innovation Centre, UIC

The UIC was established at the beginning of 2019 to strengthen the processes and organisational structure for the commercialisation of research and the interaction of external stakeholders. The center now has ten experts working in the areas of IPR, business development and company collaboration. The UIC is responsible for the coordination of innovation activities (from inventions to patents, licensing, and startups) and business collaboration (incl. Business Finland funding) of the university. The UIC has improved in many KPIs: the number of inventions and patent application has grown, and both company and Business Finland funding has grown. Innovation activities and company collaboration are managed systematically, and results and activities are reported regularly to the Vice Rector of Cooperation and to the Cooperation Management Group.