

AUDIT OF AALTO UNIVERSITY

Tekijät **Antoinette Perry, Mia Brzakovic, Mika Konu, Geir Øien & Sirpa Moitus, Self-assessment of Aalto University (ed.) Rediet Abebe**

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3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

Strategic management and the quality system are strongly interconnected

Aalto's [quality system](#) supports the continuous development of the university's living strategy and core activities (Figure 3). Aalto University's purpose is to shape a sustainable future. Aalto's operations are built on a foundation of high-quality research, education, impact and shared values – responsibility, courage and collaboration. The quality policy sets the principle that everyone works towards this joint purpose. The link between strategic management and the quality system is solid, visible and impactful.

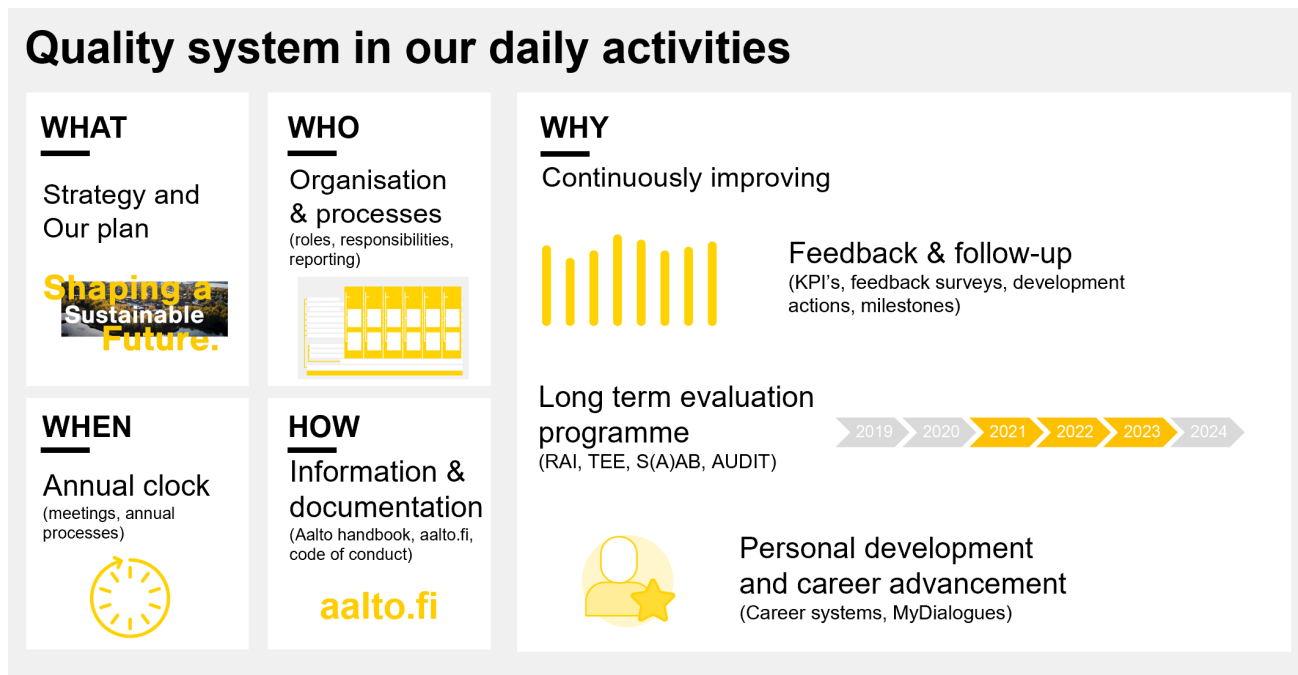


Figure 3. Elements of the quality system at Aalto

Aalto's [annual strategic processes](#), namely the University Preview, University Review and University Dialogue, link the strategy implementation and the quality system together (Figure 4). Aalto's living strategy is continuously developed through these processes. In University Preview, the emerging trends and developments shaping the operating environment are analysed. In University Review, the strategy implementation during the previous year is reviewed. In University Dialogue, targets for the strategy implementation for the upcoming 1+3 years are set. These processes ensure that information from the quality system is used in the management of Aalto. Strategic plans, with indicator targets and development actions, are documented in the university's target agreement, Our plan. The annual clock ensures the timely planning and implementation of key annual management and strategic planning and development actions.

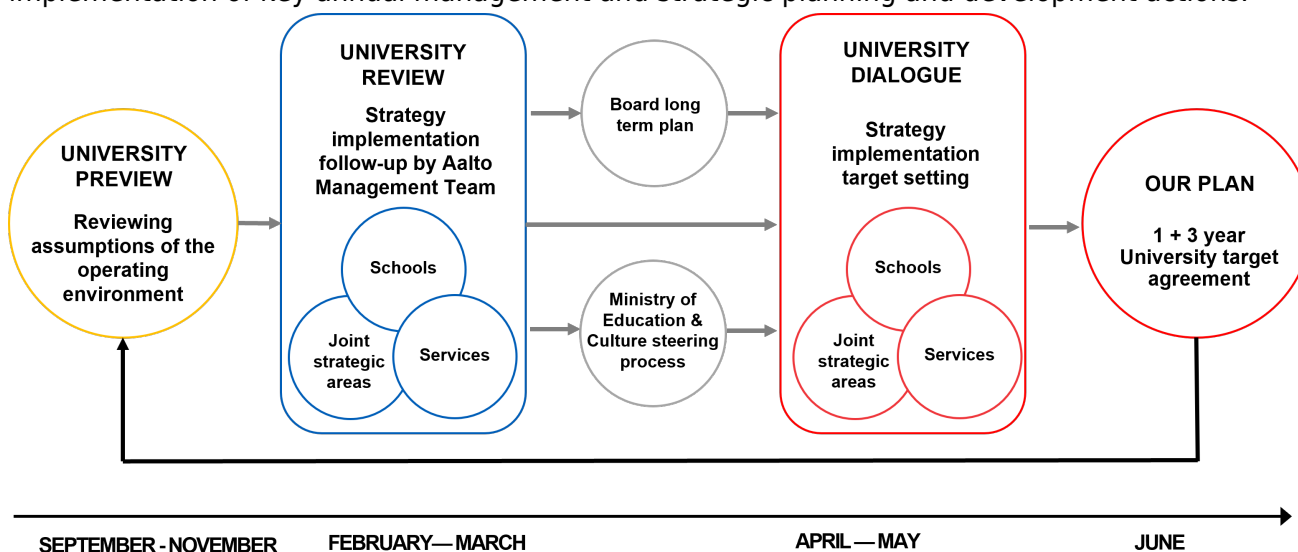


Figure 4. Annual strategic management processes and their interconnections

The implementation of recommendations and feedback from quality evaluations, conducted based on Aalto's long-term evaluation plan, is carefully followed up on through annual strategic processes.

Strategy implementation is monitored based on evidence from the quality system

Based on the recommendations in the latest quality audit (in 2016), the university has made substantial progress in the use of indicators and data in monitoring the implementation of its strategy. For example, in 2019 Aalto adopted a novel living strategy approach that is tailored for a world in motion through an inclusive process in which target setting and review of performance against indicators are integrated into the strategy process.

Clearly defined and systematically maintained Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are used to evaluate research, education, impact and enablers. Aalto's performance at all levels is monitored using accurate, timely and openly accessible data from the KPI dashboard and Aalto Key Information reports, both available on the Power BI cloud service since 2018. This tool is also used to monitor Aalto's human resources and finances. Aalto's KPI Handbook is updated annually during the University Review process based on input from the Aalto community. KPI dashboards are used by the Aalto Management Team (AMT) for trimesterly follow ups (T1, T2, T3) and in schools and steering groups throughout the year.

Aalto has decided to monitor the cross-cutting approaches of its strategy not with numeric metrics but based on milestones. Work is still on-going to improve the interconnections between the strategic cross-cutting approaches and to follow up their implementation in schools and steering groups.

Systematic mechanisms link individual work and Aalto's strategic objectives

The 'My Dialogue' process links the strategic targets of Aalto with the targets of individual staff. This well-functioning process integrates goals, wellbeing and competence development to achieve Aalto's strategic goals. Employees develop personal goals and specify how they are linked to Aalto's priorities, mainly by using the Workday system. Feedback from supervisors ensures that employees receive support during this vital process.

As part of a systematic onboarding process, new employees review their tasks and the goals of their job, get to know Aalto University's way of working and work community, and familiarise themselves with the guidelines linked with their work. The Workday system, a structured onboarding guide and onboarding buddies support this process.

The annually updated Aalto Handbook contains information on the university's shared way of managing and organising its core activities in a uniform manner that meets high standards. The

consistent practical guidelines, operating principles and process descriptions for everyday work constitute the basis for quality work and serve as orientation material for new employees and students.

Strengths

Annual strategic processes ensure the effective implementation and continuous development of Aalto's living strategy. These processes also foster participatory, transparent and dialogic approaches.

Strong commitment of the Aalto community to realising the university's strategy and excellence in its core activities.

Resource planning and strategic planning are connected in the University Dialogue, where joint plans, targets and resourcing are set for the upcoming 1+3 year period.

Enhancement areas

Development work is still needed to better incorporate the planning of services at large into the annual University Dialogue.

Linking structured feedback from the schools and departments to services, as well as KPIs for services, is still needed.

Better utilisation of all available digital tools and platforms for more effective community discussion and communication.