

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

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4.1 Management of education programme portfolio

- Högskolans självvärdering

Focus and concrete objectives of the assessment

By the year 2030, the university aims to increase the number of degree students to 7,500 and the share of international students to 35%. The University of Vaasa has proposed to the Ministry of Education and Culture ambitious degree goals for the years 2025 – 2028. By doing so, the university is responding to Finland’s goals to increase the proportion of people with higher education and skilled R&D professionals. Achieving the higher degree goals necessitates actions to support smooth and fast study pathways, and a significant increase in the number of students from Finland and internationally. It is important to maintain high quality teaching with available resources.

The management and renewal of the education programme portfolio was selected as a self-assessment area in the Karvi audit because of its importance and complexity. By programme portfolio, we mean our degree programmes for bachelor’s and master’s degrees. In this self-assessment, we specifically focus on the renewal of the portfolio. In addition to this, we carry out development activities to improve pedagogical development, guidance and supervision, smart digitalization, student recruitment, and marketing.

The objectives of this self-assessment are: i) to describe the required activities and procedures for programme portfolio development; ii) to identify the strengths in the process; and iii) to identify enhancement areas. The self-assessment also includes a bench-learning case.

The development actions for programme portfolio renewal

The renewal of the programme portfolio includes several simultaneous processes to be managed: i) merging and scaling the programmes and courses to achieve critical mass, ii) developing the curricula to form lean and coherent programmes with synergies between the programmes, and iii) renewing the programme management practices for flexible study pathways and delivery. In addition, we are working on iv) enhanced proactive methods for data-driven growth management) processes for timely and fluent student recruitment and admission.

This development work is carried out in the programmes and schools, in the joint development and decision-making groups for education (KOKE and Education Council), and in the UVA management group. The process is led by the Vice Rector for Education, together with the Deans. The processes are supported by the Education and Student Services.

Assessment of strengths and enhancement areas

The strategic development programmes have started, and the university community is engaged to them. Quality management approaches facilitate development processes. Faculty and students are committed to ongoing improvement. The faculty and staff is working towards the same goal. The change processes have already started, for example with programme mergers and management structure renewals. To meet the targets, thorough programme and curriculum changes are further required. More exact planning and scheduling are required to coordinate the renewal processes and comply to the university's decision-making procedures.

Benchlearning

BI Norwegian Business School (BI) in Oslo was chosen as the bench-learning organisation. It is a non-governmental business school that offers bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees to 22,000 students. The University of Vaasa management group conducted a bench-learning tour in December 2023. BI has an education programme portfolio management system in place, as well as uniform programme and course frameworks throughout the school. For the first basic courses, all curricula can use common core content. The Business School bundles related programmes into larger blocks, facilitating the sharing of digital core information for professional studies. The Business School has achieved critical mass and quality by restricting the number of distinct curricula and individual courses. Management responsibilities are organised by education level (BA, MSc, PhD), programme ownership, course ownership, and teaching responsibilities. The lean planning and operating strategy enable the BI Business School to provide a high and consistent quality education to many students. The bench-learning provided the University of Vaasa with significant insight into the synergetic development of degree programmes and their delivery to meet an increasing number of students.

Strengths

Enhancement areas

Faculty, staff and students have a constructive attitude towards change

Proactive knowledge management has started. Performance objectives are clear and actively lead

Larger, more effective study modules are being created. The delivery of educational programmes has been improved and proactive modifications have been made. The ability to collaborate has improved.

Enhanced, continuous change management is needed to ensure engagement and commitment to the change

Need to continue work to reduce degree programmes' vulnerability and teacher dependency

Need to increase student enrolment to reach ambitious degree targets, which necessitates significant steps. During the phases of putting change into action, the emphasis will be on anticipating student numbers, forecasting, and managing growth.