

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Authors **Milena Žic Fuchs, Sebastian Neufeld, Mikael Pentikäinen, Marijk van der Wende, Sirpa Moitus & Mira Huusko, Self-assessment of the University of Turku (eds.) Juha Sainio & Ilona Tuominen**

Year of publication **2023**, FINEEC publications **26:2023**

Language **English**

ISBN **978-952-206-804-0 pdf**

4.1 An evaluation area selected by the HEI

- HEI's self-assessment

Support Services for Societal Impact and Engagement

The support services for societal impact and engagement at UTU have been recently strengthened. They were placed under the responsibility of the Vice Rector for partnerships and strategic engagement with a unit with the same name, and complemented by services provided by several other units in the support services. Services presented here are primarily focused on supporting UTU community.

Through societal interaction, UTU actively enhances the creation of positive development in society. Strategic Goal of UTU is to be a *proactive and dynamic partner* (Figure 27). Accordingly, UTU aims to be a *respected and responsible societal contributor*. Furthermore, *UTU builds and maintains strong regional partnerships* that make UTU's operational environment unique and internationally attractive.

In order to realise the strategic goals, itemised sub-goals have been identified:

- > UTU carries global responsibility and is a proactive partner in development. Excellent research and education create the basis for our increasing **impact**. We train experts with a **capacity for change, who build a sustainable future** in different sectors of society.
- > UTU is an open and proactive societal contributor. Our research is employed in **decision-making**. Our researchers highlight scientific information and its significance, introduce perspectives to the public debate, and **emphasise matters requiring research**. We are a responsible advocate of science and a pioneer in research advisory activities.
- > UTU values close collaboration in regional, national and international networks. UTU engages in **long-term and goal-oriented partnerships**. Strategic collaboration strengthens our societal impact. UTU collaborates with **business life** to create opportunities for **new innovations and their commercialisation as well as business development**. UTU increases regional well-being and development through our three campuses on the western coast of Finland.
- > UTU has an excellent international reputation and standing as a global education provider. UTU realises **transnational education** in a responsible manner and produces additional value.

Figure 27. Itemised sub-goals in the strategy of UTU

UTU has five units (Figure 28) with services focused on supporting and highlighting the positive trajectories created through UTU’s basic tasks. These include responsibilities in the University-level partnerships and strategic engagement on a national as well as international level, continuous learning, research and innovation support, strategic development, and increasing the visibility of UTU’s societal impact and engagement. The units support the UTU community also by issuing University-level guidelines and policies, intermediating between administration and faculties, aiding the UTU management in decision-making, and providing personalised guidance to the members of the University community. Services are accessible to entire UTU community.

Rector				
Vice Rector for Partnerships and Strategic Engagement	Vice Rector for Educational Affairs	Vice Rector for Research Affairs and Library	Director of Strategic Planning	Communications Director
Director of the Partnership and Strategic Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <i>Partnerships and Strategic Engagement</i> > Services for Sustainable Development > Partnerships and Partnership Management > Monitoring Societal Interaction and Impact > UTU Business Collaboration > Alumni Relations > Entrepreneurship Promotion > International Networks > Fundraising 	Director of Educational Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <i>Educational Affairs</i> > Open University and Life Long Learning > Student Support Services > E.g. global educational services 	Director of Research Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <i>Research Affairs</i> > Innovation Services > Research Development > Research Career > Research Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <i>Strategic Planning</i> > E.g. strategic foresight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <i>University Communications</i> > E.g. communication with media

Figure 28. Support services of societal engagement and impact at UTU. Note: Services illustrated here do not represent all UTU services that belong to the remit of Rector, Vice-rectors and Directors.

Fund-raising activities communicate about UTU to society in a diverse manner, thereby expanding the awareness of the University’s impact. The fund-raising services is responsible for University-level donations as well as supporting the faculties in their fund-raising. UTU exceeded its €5M fund-raising goal for the state-matched funding scheme 2020–2022. Fund raising policy is expected to be issued by April 2023. Partnerships and partnership management services support UTU’s decision-making and operational development. It is supported by a *partnership management system* which is currently under development. UTU was successful in forming two new University-level strategic partnerships in 2022. Policy for strategic and University-level partnerships was approved in 2022.

UTU Business Collaboration (UBC) boosts research project funding preparation with companies. The impact can include increased sustainability and better competitiveness. Since the service was established in 2021, UTU has been successful in increasing the number of applications submitted to Business Finland (Co-Creation and Co-Innovation). The UBC services are implemented together with the Innovation Services and it complements the Research Funding in the Research Affairs. In the same unit, Research Development analyses the services for impact at different stages of the research process. It also organises training for different profiling areas in UTU. UTU is particularly focused on the promotion of open science and was placed on the highest

level in Finland in 2022.

Entrepreneurship promotion services increase entrepreneurial thinking and activity, and support the development of research-driven innovations at UTU. Through the services, students and researchers are introduced to and supported in entrepreneurial matters which ultimately boost business activity and economy. In 2022, UTU was awarded as the first Finnish university with the international ACEEU (Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities) accreditation for its efforts in entrepreneurship promotion and societal engagement. The Innovation Services work in collaboration with the entrepreneurship promotion services in guiding individuals in the early stages of business development. The unit is also responsible for the statutory innovation notification process and coordinates a systematic method for searching, screening, and upgrading innovation proposals. In addition, it coordinates the “Research to business” funding. Since 2012, UTU has received funding for 44 out of 62 projects (71%) and for 45 out of 89 applications (51%) with the total funding being 16.26M€.

The 50,000 alumni form an important interest group for UTU. The alumni relations are steered with annual action plans. The focus is on the faculties and units that collaborate with their alumni in the way that best suits their discipline. The objective of the centralised alumni relations is to support the faculties in strengthening their alumni co-operation through offering advice, increasing communications, and organising events. Recently, services especially for the international alumni have been strengthened.

Internal collaboration between different services and shared teams across units create synergy. For example, services for sustainable development and international networks both support the creation of domestic and global societal impact by implementing the UN’s sustainable development goals. In 2022, UTU launched an ambitious Action Plan for Sustainable Campus Life and, already in 2018, committed to carbon neutrality by 2025. Another example is the monitoring and assessment of societal interaction and impact, which includes collecting, analysing, and distributing information to management and faculties. This work is realised in co-operation with the Strategic Planning unit. The Rector provides feedback to faculties once per year on their societal interaction.

Faculties, units, and support services (e.g. Partnerships and Strategic Engagement) are responsible for disseminating the research results to society, e.g. by influencing decision-making. They are supported by the University Communications that communicate and monitor UTU’s public image which is formed through research and education. Educational Affairs offers support and advice in matters and processes related to undergraduate education, but also in continuous learning, where impact is achieved primarily through the open university education. These services also include Global Educational Services that made 25 education export deals in 2021.

Strengths	Enhancement areas
Basic funding directed to internal services ensures the availability and quality of the support services for societal impact and engagement. The services were notably strengthened with a new organisation in 2021 with clear responsibilities	On the University-level, there is a lack of comprehensive reporting system for some of the services (such as sustainable development, the extent and different forms of company collaboration)
Existing services are directly linked to the UTU Strategy. In addition, the cross-cutting themes of the UTU Strategy, including internationality, open science and impact, responsibility and sustainable development, are present in the services	Delivery of the services necessitate human resources and proper structures not only in the administration but also in the faculties and units. Regarding some services, structures are still being developed (e.g. alumni relations)
Guidelines and policies ensure strategic, systematic and long-term activities, such as policies and guidelines for the University-level partnerships, fund-raising policy, IPR, establishing a research-based company	Monitoring impact cannot be based solely on quantitative indicators, i.e. numbers. More diverse indicators are needed
Research-to-business process is working efficiently at UTU, providing ongoing funding opportunities for companies with international growth potential	UTU is applying a network model in order to ensure an extensive and versatile environment for supporting the growth of entrepreneurship. However, more attention is needed in building entrepreneurial teams with other actors in the entrepreneurship ecosystem
UTU has versatile and well-established co-operation with actors from different sectors of society, incl. industry. An example of this are University-level strategic partners, with whom co-operation is promoted throughout UTU's basic missions	Some services are in the development phase, e.g. the new partnership management system may require help with the technical aspects
Internationality is part of the essential structures and services. For example, international activities and networks have been strengthened recently, including the alumni relations, international advisory board, and the International Programme of UTU	

4.1 An evaluation area selected by the HEI

- Assessment of the audit team

UTU has a strong ambition and shared strategic goal to promote societal impact and its services

UTU's support services for societal impact and engagement were established in 2021. Its task is to promote the effective implementation of the University of Turku's missions and the active interaction between the University and its stakeholders. Many of its strategy's cross-cutting themes are present in support services. The support services help UTU management in steering its societal impact and engagement. The services were recently reorganised to strengthen the effectiveness of UTU's societal impact, support management in this key task and increase inter-institutional cooperation between faculties for impact and with stakeholders. The idea is also to

help faculties with societal impact issues.

Societal impact is a jointly shared goal and direction of the UTU community. The organisation of support services is clear and well-established. The University has appointed a Vice Rector responsible for partnerships and strategic engagement. Otherwise, the support services of societal impact are organised under a director of partnerships and strategic engagement. In some faculties, vice deans for societal impact have also been appointed. UTU's societal interaction and impact are enhanced by its Advisory Board and International Advisory Board. According to the audit visit, it seems to be a logical solution to place the support services in one unit under the responsible Vice Rector. This could bring synergy and a holistic approach.

In the support services for societal impact, most key elements are in place or at least in the working process. The renewed administration and management structure supports providing support services for societal impact and engagement.

The societal influence and engagement support services are appropriately targeted at different tasks and user groups. However, not all community members were aware of them yet due to the newness of the services. For instance, students seem not to be sufficiently aware of UTU's partnerships. The flow of information to students should be strengthened regarding internships and other opportunities to learn and do research in the corporate and public sectors cooperating with UTU.

Support services for societal impact are well organised

The University has been developing determinedly its support services for societal impact. The services are currently well organised, and many development projects are ongoing. There is a Unit for Partnerships and Strategic Engagement. Based on staff interviews, the staff values the work of support functions. It helps interinstitutional interaction.

Strategic development: The Strategic Planning Unit is responsible for producing and analysing strategic foresight information on UTU's national and international environment. This Unit should ensure that foresight information is widely available and fully exploited in strategic development. Other available strategic information should also be timely, easily accessible and verifiable.

Sustainability development services support the University's development, and sustainability is integrated into all of UTU's core functions and services. Communicating and acting on sustainable development should be seen as positive, inspiring and adding value to all activities. The audit team is delighted to see special services for that. The audit team recommends that sustainable development be considered in all UTU's activities, education provisions and research. These themes should be placed at the core of activities as far as possible.

Partnerships and strategic engagement services coordinate university-level partnerships and support faculties in maintaining and developing a partnership management programme (CRM). For faculties and especially academic faculty members, managing and maintaining partnerships may be a new issue for which they need help and support. The audit team

recommends that the previously collected data by faculties should be compiled in the management programme so that faculty members can update the partnerships themselves. If more than one faculty have the same partners, information on cooperation should be brought together in one place.

Monitoring of societal interaction and impact: Several units monitor UTU's societal interaction, impact, operational environment and broad societal trends from different perspectives. The audit team recommends that these units utilise existing indicator data in mutual collaboration and supported by the partnership management programme (CRM).

UTU Business Collaborations (UBC) help researchers and research projects with funding preparations with companies. UBC works closely with research affairs, which is important because many questions are the same in both support units, even if funding instruments vary.

Entrepreneurship promotion services increase entrepreneurial thinking and activity, advise on developing a business idea, drawing up a business plan and raising funds. Services also support the development of research-driven innovations at UTU. The Entrepreneurial Hub Konttori is the primary place and source of information for all students interested in entrepreneurship. Collaboration with the students' entrepreneurship association is essential for continuing activities and setting objectives and long-term planning. The audit team encourages entrepreneurship promotion services to work in close connection with UBC.

Alumni relations services coordinate UTU's alumni relations and support faculties and units developing alumni relations via the alumni network and register. The alumni network is a considerable asset for the University. There is an unused potential in local, national, and global alumni networks, businesses and industries. Based on the interviews, the alumni network should be listened to more to receive input and feedback from the UTU community. An alumni network is one way to collect and analyse feedback. Alumni are usually happy to share their expertise with their alma mater, and they can also be future donors. The audit team recommends that UTU make the alumni network known to all current students. The audit team also recommends that the University strengthen the utilisation of alumni network and alumni database, and the potential embedded in the alumni cooperation.

International network services promote strategic international cooperation and mobility and facilitate cooperation between stakeholders and networks at local, regional, national and international levels. As internationalisation is at its best in all the University's activities, international networks are the University's lifeblood. The audit team recommends that the University of Turku increase the international dimension of all partnerships. International networks should be visible to students through international exchanges, internships, teaching content, research and broader societal interaction. CRM is a good tool for managing international networks.

Fundraising services coordinate UTU's fundraising and donations. The fundraising services also support faculties in fundraising. Fundraising policy, partnerships, partner relationship

management (CRM) and development are also in progress and should be finalised soon. A clear and ambitious fundraising policy is vital to increase external funding. The cooperation with funders must be continuous, sustainable and built on trust.

The UTU Communications Unit manages the University's communication and marketing, develops communication methods, skills, and tools, provides communication training and supports faculties in communication. Communication is essential to maintaining societal relations and reputation and disseminating research results to the public. Communications are well organised and implemented. UTU's magazine, websites and social media accounts are in place, and the communication unit is active. The Communications Unit monitors UTU's public image and deals with media connections. The unit helps research teams communicate research results in a societally effective way.

Research Funding services, part of research affairs, offer support for researchers in the application phase of supplementary funding in matters regarding funders' terms, writing a proposal and planning a research project. The unit also assists with the negotiation phases of international projects and project amendments. The project coordinators support the implementation of individual projects. Already at the stage of applying for research funding, it is worthwhile to consider the research's impact and where support services can help. It is also crucial for other research affairs, such as innovation services, research development and research careers, to keep in mind the promotion of societal engagement and its impact on their own activities.

Other support services, such as academic affairs and HR, also have many activities that have similarities with support services for societal impact and interaction. Open University, continuous learning and global student services are direct societal impact activities in many ways. In HR, especially recruitment, communication is essential to societal interaction and engagement at regional, national and international levels.

Proposals for next steps

Based on the audit interviews, further cooperation between the support services, faculties and different advisory groups should be developed. Regarding the support services, it could be considered whether the members of the advisory boards could be utilised in obtaining research funding and creating new connections. The support services must be integrated into the work of faculties. Based on the UTU staff interviews, the integration into faculties seems to work well.

Wider adoption of CRM and upgrading or replacing the research information system will help with many of the problems encountered in the early years of the support services. The audit team considers it essential that up-to-date information is readily available on the various societal impact and engagement activities, educational provisions and research. Faculty members also need to be engaged in the importance of societal interaction as part of the University's work.

International talent can have a significant societal impact in many ways. Therefore, the

international dimension should be strongly involved in all support services. Talented international labour is also key to the Turku region in attracting investments and new researchers.

The usefulness of support services must be verifiable. Its different functions should be monitored closely with a comprehensive reporting system and indicators. In order to support the development of support services, feedback from stakeholders must be collected and analysed regularly, and activities developed based on them. Stakeholders should also be informed about actions made based on their feedback. Discussion events with stakeholders are also valuable for generating enhancement ideas. Making process maps also helps lean processes so that all benefit.