

University of Vaasa – strategy 2017–
2020

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University of Vaasa – strategy 2017–2020

1 The University of Vaasa is reinventing itself

The strategic period from 2017 to 2020 will be a time of change for Finnish universities, characterised by the specialisation (profiling) of higher education institutes, the scarcity of funding, and the reinforcement of the societal impact of education and research. International competition will also take on a clearer role in the field of research and education. This development is being driven primarily by digitalisation and the new opportunities that accompany it.

The University of Vaasa will address these challenges by clarifying its profile, reallocating its resources, and developing its organisation and networks. The University of Vaasa aims to operate as a clearly profiled, financially efficient, high-quality independent unit.

1.1 Mission

‘Energising business and society’

1.2 The University's vision for 2025

The University of Vaasa is a business-oriented, multidisciplinary, international university. In its focus areas, the University conducts impactful research of a high international standard and educates competitive experts in various fields. The strategic period from 2017 to 2020 will be a time for the University of Vaasa to streamline its operations and build new things. We are strengthening our business orientation. We are directing social sciences and research into communications towards understanding the dynamic of changes in society and the economy. We are creating energy for multidisciplinary technical breakthroughs and the special area of expertise concerned with the commercial and societal opportunities that these breakthroughs represent.

The University operates in active and responsible interaction with society globally, nationally and locally. The University of Vaasa aims to be a trendsetter and pioneer in a changing world where development is characterised by new value propositions and entirely new ways of creating value.

2 The University's profile and focus areas

The University's profile combines high-level expertise in the fields of business, humanities, social science, and technology. The multidisciplinary profile is reinforced by the University's focus areas:

- Management and change
- Energy and sustainable development
- Finance and economic decision-making

Expertise related to the University's focus areas is essential for the development of society, economics and technology. The areas in which the University of Vaasa has strong research and education of a high international standard are the fields of management and finance. In addition to management, accounting, marketing and finance – areas belonging to business studies – the University is strongly represented in public-sector management and communications, which are being developed in line with the University's new strategy. Up-and-coming fields at the University include new energy technology, energy business, and multidisciplinary research and education related to the broader societal impacts of these fields. This emerging area of expertise enables the University to strengthen the region's competence centre in the international energy industry, an area of national importance.

The University of Vaasa's focus areas are unified by the concept of value and new ways to create value in relation to business, sustainable development and well-being. Changes related to the concept and creation of value materially affect the management of businesses and public-sector organisations. That is why it is important for the University to develop its own operations and discover innovative new ways to create value.

2.1 Objectives for research

Research groups of a high international standard operate in all of the University's focus areas. In order to realise its research objectives, the University of Vaasa will make major investments in world-class research activities, quality and influence. Alongside traditional faculty-specific research, the University will strongly promote phenomenon-based research that transcends faculty boundaries. Investments will be made in researching problems of societal and scientific significance by establishing multidisciplinary business-oriented research platforms. These research platforms will link up with the surrounding society and the international competence centre to improve the quality and effectiveness of research. The University of Vaasa will actively utilise the new research methodologies and materials enabled by digitalisation.

2.1.1 Attractive, multidisciplinary research infrastructures

Attractive, world-class research environments and phenomenon-based research platforms will entice the best researchers in the focus areas to come to the University of Vaasa. The research infrastructures are internationally competitive, and they benefit from the strengths of the surrounding competence centre. These include global business, financing and related business, entrepreneurship, energy, and sustainable development. The research platforms will play a major role in the University of Vaasa's operations, particularly in strengthening its high-quality, world-class research activities and the content of its education. Special attention will be paid to the quality and effectiveness of the research platforms, which will be phenomenon-based and multidisciplinary. The platforms must have a strategic research plan evaluated by international experts, significant external financing, a top-level academic leader, and a steering group consisting of experts from outside the University. The *Vaasa Energy Business Innovation Centre* (VEBIC) has already undergone considerable development, paving the way for the development of phenomenon-based research platforms in other focus areas, as well as for collaboration that transcends faculty boundaries.

2.1.2 An attractive career in research offers plentiful opportunities

Researcher training at the University of Vaasa is diverse and strongly networked, both nationally and internationally. The University is actively involved in national researcher academies. Researchers are provided with support and tools they need to internationalise and make progress in their careers, whether this is in an academic environment, as entrepreneurs, within the public sector, or in a global company. In addition to research communities, doctoral students are also strongly integrated with business and working life, as well as the competence centre surrounding the University. This ensures that post-graduates remain highly employable. In addition, companies and the University benefit from mutually complementary research resources and expertise.

2.2 Objectives for education

As a whole, the University of Vaasa is an attractive and inspiring place to study. Our competitiveness is based on recruiting excellent students from Finland and abroad, exploiting synergies between research and education, maintaining the staff's pedagogical expertise, and providing high-quality degree programmes that ensure good employability.

The University will reinforce its focus areas and research platforms to provide knowledge-based education. The University's business orientation manifests itself in terms of studies designed to provide students with business expertise and an international approach. Education that utilises new digital tools will be developed systematically. It will enable entirely new ways of learning, regardless of the time or place. The University of Vaasa offers a community that invests in the well-being of students as people and as active participants in development.

2.2.1 High-quality, effective education

Our education is efficient. The University ensures that progress is made towards completing degrees within the target time by providing efficiently organised degree programme structures, clear study paths, and customer-centric student services. The University will revamp its degree programmes to ensure that wide-ranging bachelor's programmes provide a route for transitioning onto profiled, more internationalised master's programmes. The degree programmes will address society's educational needs, and the emphasis on relevance to working life will improve employability. Joint degree programme management will ensure that students see the revamped programmes as attractive and of high quality, sufficiently large, sufficiently well resourced, and efficient. Accreditation will help the business and technical faculties to sharpen their international quality profiles.

2.2.2 An international campus of three higher education institutes and modern learning environments

Vaasa's multicultural environment and international maritime campus shared by three institutes of higher education serve to boost students' motivation to learn while providing a strong foundation for operating in a changing global world. Students and staff are provided with opportunities for active, methodical international mobility. Digitalisation has enabled new pedagogical solutions, learning platforms, and access to open teaching content from top international universities, giving rise to modern learning environments for students. The University is a strong provider of adult education all over Finland. Exports of education services will be systematically developed in collaboration with international partner universities.

2.3 Objectives for societal interaction

The University of Vaasa systematically promotes societal influence by producing up-to-date, high-level research and education. The region's nationally significant competence centre in the energy sector operates on global markets and the University of Vaasa has close interaction with the competence centre in terms of teaching, research and staff mobility. To make its interactions with society even more effective, the University will begin using a set of indicators to measure its influence and manage its operations. Indicators of societal influence will be developed for the following areas: tasks and achievements related to business and the economy, planning public administration and participating in implementing plans, other societal tasks and operating in areas of culture.

3 Other strategic development targets and monitoring execution

3.1 Developing networks and collaboration

3.1.1 Developing the university collaboration network

The quality of research will be further reinforced by developing collaboration with universities in Finland and abroad, as well as with research and education networks. Partnerships between universities will be developed in each field in line with the University's profile. The existing partnerships between research groups and high-level universities and research institutes are strong and will be maintained while new forms of collaboration are developed.

The University will develop collaboration with Umeå University in the fields of business studies and sustainable development. The partnership in business studies will cover education ranging from bachelor's degree studies to post-graduate education, double degrees, joint professorships, research projects, and acquiring external funding. The University of Vaasa and Umeå University complement each other in terms of business studies, the field of energy and sustainable development themes. Societal management and regional development on a Nordic level are also natural joint development targets. Overall, the partnership supports the University's profiling and internationalisation.

3.1.2 Collaboration with the Vaasa University of Applied Sciences on education

Collaboration with the Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK) will be expanded to enable the use of both institutes' teaching resources and studying times to be optimised. This collaboration provides students with access to a better range of courses. There will be shared content in the field of technology equivalent to two years of studies. In addition, VAMK's students will be offered a clear study path that can enable them to transfer to full university studies. In addition to technology, the University of Vaasa will expand its collaboration with VAMK in terms of education in business studies. Degree programmes and courses will be developed in a coordinated way, and students will be provided with clear study paths that enable a flexible transition to full university studies.

3.1.3 Reinforcing regional influence

The University of Vaasa is actively involved in a Nordic-oriented collaboration project named Kvarken, which will benefit from improved transport links and the region's growth potential in the form of even better opportunities. Collaboration is taking place between states (Finland, Sweden and Norway), regions, urban areas and universities. The Vaasa region naturally has strong Nordic links, and efforts will be made to further boost the University's influence via logistics, sustainable development, and expertise in languages and culture.

Collaboration with the university centres in Seinäjoki and Kokkola, as well as with the Universities of Applied Sciences in Seinäjoki and Central Ostrobothnia, will continue and development will take place via regional master's programmes, open university studies, continuing professional education, and service research, as well as via regionally funded professorships in the Seinäjoki and Kokkola university centres. Collaboration with Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences will be developed with a focus on entrepreneurship. In Kokkola, the emphasis will be on business development.

3.1.4 Boosting the efficiency of campus infrastructure and services

The *Tritonia* science library, which is shared by five higher education institutes, will become an expert in digital learning services, as well as a provider of technical services. The provision of language services in collaboration with various university units and higher education institutes in the Vaasa region will be developed further. Collaboration on laboratories (*VEBIC* and *Technobothia*) and campus services will be developed in collaboration with VAMK and Yrkeshögskolan Novia. In addition to the aforementioned factors, the collaboration covers teaching premises, information technology and related support services and security services.

3.2 The University of Vaasa as an operating environment

The University of Vaasa is a good employer and a desirable place to study. It is well known as an interactive academic community. The University offers a strong basis for efficient, constantly renewing work. The University's *HRM Excellence* operating model supports staff in developing their expertise, motivation and operating practices that promote well-being.

3.2.1 Internationalisation

The internationalism and quality of the University of Vaasa's research activities are systematically developed in the University's focus areas and by investing research platforms, international research networks and competitive research funding with the aim of achieving top quality.

Research is developed in a goal-oriented manner via high-level Finnish and international partnerships and researcher mobility. The University supports international mobility and work in international environments as a means of developing researchers' expertise. Methods for recruiting high-level international researchers are developed with a long-term approach and the investment of additional resources.

The internationalisation of the University of Vaasa's staff and students is good by national standards. Development will continue with a staff recruitment strategy, targeted international marketing of education, and partner universities. Material offered by international learning platforms and top universities will be used more efficiently as a result of experiences gained from pilot projects that are currently underway.

3.2.2 Digitalisation

Utilising digitalisation as part of teaching, research and organising the University's activities is an important strategic development target for the University of Vaasa. This includes developing and commercialising learning environments and educational content, as well as reinforcing collaborative networks. The key aspects are the best international learning content and developing the *Edulab* services offered by Tritonia, the science library. The University of Vaasa also actively participates in national projects jointly run by higher education institutes to develop digital education tools and learning materials.

Lifelong, year-round studying will become possible thanks to digital tools. In addition to education, new tools and methods will be utilised for research, marketing, and boosting the efficiency of the University's administration. For research, digitalisation offers new methods, materials, and international networks. At the same time, utilising changing tools and methods also requires staff expertise to be developed in all the aforementioned areas. In relation to this, the University of Vaasa is participating in projects to develop studying, as well as tools and analytical methods to support study guidance.

3.2.3 Entrepreneurship, start-ups and SMEs

The environment in Vaasa is characterised by a strong tradition of entrepreneurship. This plays a part in supporting the University's research and education, which will be expanded in the areas of entrepreneurship and SMEs. Further collaboration will be undertaken with entrepreneurs, SMEs and entrepreneur organisations. A diverse range of investments will be made in promoting the commercialisation of research results in collaboration with financiers and companies in the sector. In relation to this, a company incubator and start-up business organisation is being developed with the University, researchers, students and third parties. New phenomenon-based research platforms also include a perspective on commercialising research results.

3.2.4 HR management

The entire University has a consistent recruitment policy that includes open applications and the objective of hiring the best researchers and teachers of international standard. Systematic HR management development (HRM Excellence) contributes to reinforcing the University of Vaasa's attractiveness and lays the foundation for occupational well-being.

3.2.5 The University's structure

The University of Vaasa's organisational structure will be developed so that it effectively enables operations in accordance with the new strategy for 2017–2020. To boost operational efficiency and reinforce profiling, the University of Vaasa will make its operations more efficient and turn a critical eye to educational entities with a limited prospects for the future. The management system will be made more consistent and best practices will be taken into use throughout the University. The University's structure will be developed so that degree programmes, research groups and multidisciplinary phenomenon-based research platforms are sufficiently large. The renewed university services organisation will support customer-oriented services, thereby contributing to efficiently carrying out the University's basic tasks with a high standard of quality. The development project has already commenced with the goals of improving the quality of services and providing services more efficiently while saving resources. The new service organisation will begin operating at full capacity in spring 2016.

3.3 Monitoring and evaluating the execution of the strategy

The execution of the strategy will be monitored using indicators related to objectives applying to all universities, as well as those related to the University of Vaasa's strategic focus areas. Monitoring and reporting on the strategy involves regular quantitative and qualitative reporting to senior managers. The Rector is responsible for the execution, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, which will be managed together with the University's management team. The Rector reports to the board on the progress of the execution of the strategy.

The key monitoring targets in the focus areas are trends in research results, competitive funding and researcher education results, as well as the degree of internationalisation of research. The University's research activities are evaluated every five years. The realisation of strategic goals in educational activities is evaluated in terms of the success in recruiting students onto degree programmes, progress in studies, completion of business-related modules, the degree of internationalisation of education, employment of graduates and feedback from students. The University's degree programmes are evaluated regularly. The realisation of goals related to societal interaction is evaluated via regular tracking surveys. Indicators of influence will be developed for the following areas: tasks and achievements related to business and the economy, planning public administration and participating in implementing plans, operating in the areas of culture and society.

The University's management system is regularly evaluated using occupational well-being surveys and service surveys designed to analyse the functionality of support services. The balance of finances is monitored monthly. Internal control evaluates risk management and the management of operations in accordance with strategic goals.

The targets for each focus area and income unit are specified in the operational programme, which is based on the strategy.