



SUSTAINABLE, RESPONSIBLE AND CARBON-NEUTRAL UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Programme for the sustainable
development and responsibility of
universities of applied sciences



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Programme for the sustainable development and responsibility of universities of applied sciences

Sustainable, responsible and carbon-neutral universities of applied sciences

Humankind's actions are exceeding the carrying capacity of our planet, threatening the future of our children. We cannot find solutions to the problems of the future with old models of thought and action. Expertise is the single greatest catalyst for necessary societal change.

Producing expertise and experts is a way for universities of applied sciences to support the sustainable and responsible development of society, industry, and business. The annual contribution of 30,000 people graduating to the labour market, as well as research, development and innovation (RDI) worth EUR 220 million, and 9,500 person-years annually has an enormous role when we are building the future of society.

The sustainability and responsibility work of universities of applied sciences is guided by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the sustainable development guidelines by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The 2030 Agenda recognises the importance of education and RDI for achieving necessary changes. Sustainable development refers to ecologically, socially, culturally and economically sustainable development. For universities of applied sciences, responsibility means that we take into account the direct and indirect impacts on the surrounding society in all our activities.

With our expertise, we support and challenge industry and business, higher education insti-



Picture: un.org

tutions, municipalities, personnel and students to build a more sustainable future. The environment, people, and the economy are taken into account equally in our decision-making and everyday activities.

The common goal of the communities of universities of applied sciences is to reduce the footprint of our actions and to increase our impact, or “handprint”, in the development of society. This handprint refers to the impact of the education provided by universities of applied sciences as well as the research, development and innovation activities of universities of applied sciences, and their potential to change society, business, and industry. Our handprint will be increased by expert personnel in education as well as RDI. Development work, monitoring, and sharing best practices are persistent efforts. We will reduce our footprint so that we will be carbon neutral by 2030. Together with their partners, universities of applied sciences and their graduates are an important part of the solution in the struggle to combat climate change, preserve biodiversity and achieve sustainability in industry, culture, and business.

To promote our sustainability and responsibility work, we have jointly prepared commitments to increase our handprint and reduce our footprint. This programme for the sustainable development and responsibility of universities of applied sciences provides a common reference framework and supports the work of all 24 universities of applied sciences in Finland in their efforts towards a more sustainable and responsible future.

Sustainability and responsibility commitments of universities of applied sciences

Handprint – towards a carbon-neutral society through expertise

The task of universities of applied sciences is to build a globally sustainable, reasonable and fair future in cooperation with industry and business. The aim is to secure the basis for human development, well-being and adaptability in a changing world. Universities of applied sciences inspire, act as role models, and develop new more sustainable solutions with their partners.

The impact of universities of applied sciences is created by the expertise that we produce for society through education and RDI. This impact is reflected in the changes of company practices, operating models, funding principles, and ways of thinking. Graduates of universities of applied sciences and the results of our research, development and innovation help to increase the handprint of society while reducing its carbon footprint (figure 1).

Universities of applied sciences are platforms for multidisciplinary cooperation and development between different actors. With the help of education and RDI, we can produce solutions to the great challenges of humanity and therefore strengthen the societal benefits that are created.

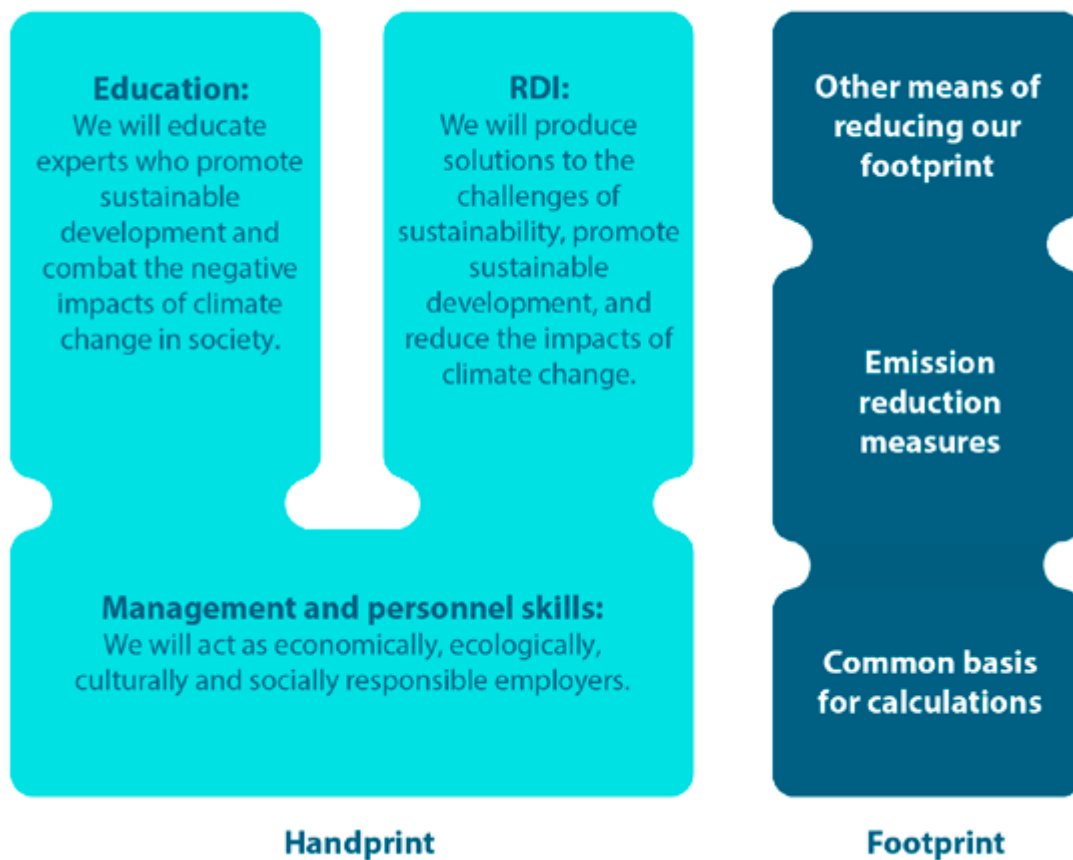


Figure 1. Aspects of increasing the handprint and reducing the footprint of universities of applied sciences

Education – sustainable development skills for everyone

Our commitment

1. Our degree programmes will produce experts who are able to promote sustainable development in industry, business, and society. All our graduates will have at least basic knowledge of sustainable development and responsibility, including climate issues, in addition to the expertise related to their respective fields. We will ensure that sustainable development and responsibility are integrated in all our degree programmes.
2. We will provide education for lifelong learning to promote persistent sustainable change in all areas and levels of society.
3. We will promote the accessibility of higher education so that everyone can strive for education and expertise regardless of their family background, gender, language, ethnic background, nationality, disability, place of residence or other factor beyond the individual.

Our measures

- We will define common learning outcomes for sustainable development in universities of applied sciences
- We will reinforce the role of sustainable development and responsibility in each curriculum.
- We will take into account sustainable development and responsibility in the lifelong learning we provide.
- We will promote and enable the development of expertise in sustainable development by integrating RDI in learning and teaching.
- We will monitor the achievement and impact of the learning outcomes of sustainable development and responsibility through feedback surveys.
- We will expand the free online education implemented in cooperation with other institutions in order to improve the accessibility of learning.
- We will take into account the different backgrounds of applicants seeking higher education in student admissions.
- We will work together to develop and utilise e-learning material related to sustainable development.
- We will work openly in extensive cooperation with higher education institutions, other educational institutions, business and industry, and other stakeholders.

RDI – solutions to the challenges of sustainability

Our commitment

1. Through our RDI activities and student involvement, we will produce solutions to sustainability challenges and promote sustainable development in cooperation with the higher education community, business life and the public sector.
2. We will use the jointly developed criteria for developing the sustainability and responsibility of RDI.
3. We will develop our operations so that one of the reasons we are a sought-after partner and employer is our sustainable and responsible RDI that is ecologically, socially, culturally and economically sustainable.

Our measures

- We will introduce a set of criteria for planning, developing, evaluating and implementing the contents and results of RDI activities in an ecologically, socially, culturally and economically sustainable and responsible manner.
- We will increase openness and transparency so that our RDI activities fulfil national sustainability targets and programmes at a regional level.
- We will produce the necessary information to support increasing the impact of our RDI activities at the local, regional, national and international level.
- We will actively and comprehensibly highlight the results of our activities and good practices for the benefit of society, especially by promoting societal discussion and the transparency of information.



Management and competent personnel – we practice what we teach

Our commitment

1. We will act as economically, ecologically, socially and culturally responsible employers. Our actions will be responsible and transparent.
2. Our personnel will be familiar with and guided by the important sustainable development policies related to their work. We will monitor the state of sustainable development and responsibility annually.
3. We will support the expertise in sustainable development and responsibility of the entire higher education community through continuous development. We will include sustainable development in the orientation of employees in the field.
4. We will develop our activities openly with personnel, students, and stakeholders.

Our measures

- We will regularly monitor the development of our personnel's expertise in sustainable development and responsibility. Based on this assessment, we will create joint measures or recommendations for the development of sustainable development and responsibility at our university of applied sciences.
- Based on the first assessment, we will prepare a shared roadmap for universities of applied sciences where we define the goals and milestones of personnel expertise in sustainable development and responsibility until the end of the 2030 strategy period.
- We will offer our personnel the opportunity to complete an online course on sustainable development and to receive an expertise certificate for it.
- We will recommend including a course in sustainable development in employee orientation.



Carbon footprint – principles of footprint reduction and a common calculation model

Universities of applied sciences will be carbon neutral by 2030. A carbon-neutral university of applied sciences is created by carrying out basic tasks responsibly and sustainably. Universities of applied sciences will set emission reduction targets based on carbon footprint calculations and commit to systematically carrying out various emission reduction measures, to monitoring the development of their carbon footprint and to working together in order to find other means of achieving carbon neutrality .

The most significant contributions to the carbon footprint at universities of applied sciences are related to commuting and travelling, real estate, food services, and procurements. It is clear that the most important development measures will involve these aspects. The amount of emissions produced from an operational point of view may vary for each university of applied sciences due to location or the extent of the campus network, for example.

Universities of applied sciences will calculate their carbon footprints according to a calculation model created with uniform criteria. This ensures the comparability and co-development of the results, for example. Universities of applied sciences will implement the carbon footprint calculation annually.

From 2030 onwards, universities of applied sciences will be climate positive in their activities. The starting point is that reducing emissions is a priority and a necessity. Carbon sinks, renewable energy production and other measures must be increased in order to achieve carbon neutrality and progress towards a climate-positive state.

Our commitment

1. We will carry out a carbon footprint calculation annually with a jointly developed calculation model and monitor the development of our carbon footprint.
2. We commit to developing and using calculation criteria to ensure consistency and transparency.
3. We will implement the jointly planned measures in order to reduce our carbon footprint and emissions.
4. We will work together to find other ways, in addition to emission reduction measures, for universities of applied sciences to achieve carbon neutrality in their target timetables.

Our measures

- We will continue to develop our existing calculation model and its instructions.
- In 2020, we will collect information on the carbon footprint of universities of applied sciences in terms of real estate and commuting.
- Depending on the availability of data, we will specify the calculation to include other areas as well.
- We will implement the annual collection and analysis of data describing the development of our carbon footprint and create actionable measures based on this analysis.
- We will create a shared roadmap containing objectives and steps towards carbon-neutral universities of applied sciences by 2030.

From programme to actions

All 24 universities of applied sciences in Finland have undertaken the commitments in this programme. The programme was prepared by a working group on sustainability and responsibility that was convened by the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences Arene ry in early 2020. Representatives of all universities of applied sciences have participated in the preparations.

Sustainability and responsibility work is one of Arene's strategic priorities. Student municipalities of universities of applied sciences and SAMOK ry (the Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences) will be invited to participate in the work.

MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP

Turo Kilpeläinen, LAB	Lasse Okkonen, Karelia
Juha Kääriä, Turku AMK	Seppo Lyyra, Savonia
Leena Liimatainen, JAMK	Johanna Huttunen, OAMK
Asseri Laitinen, VAMK	Seppo Pakanen, OAMK
Merja Laitinen, Polamk	Kirsi Knuuttila, JAMK
Jan-Erik Krusberg, Arcada	Heli Lauronen, Centria
Jorma Tuominen, VAMK	Elina Ylikoski, Diak
Terhi Junkkari, SeAMK	Pauliina Kahra, Metropolia
Anna Laurila, SAMOK	Sanna Tyni, Lapin AMK
Kati Koikkalainen, LAB	Meri Olenius, SAMK
Riitta Lehtinen, Metropolia	Kari Laasasenaho, SeAMK
Titta Pohjanmäki, Humak	Mervi Friman, HAMK
Helena Kangastie, Lapin AMK	Jaana Tolkki, Karelia
Timo Pakarinen, Karelia	Kiti Häkkinen, Haaga-Helia
Mikko Matveinen, Karelia	Elina Sagne-Ollikainen, Arcada
Taru Konst, Turku AMK	Olli Ervaala, XAMK
Sinikka Jänkälä, Lapin AMK	Kimmo Hannonen, Laurea
Sari Ahvenlampi, OAMK	Eveliina Asikainen, TAMK

The implementation of the programme will take place in universities of applied sciences in a managed way. The implementation will be supported by Arene's sustainability and responsibility group as well as the network of vice presidents and directors responsible for education, and the networks of RDI management and financial and administrative directors.

In 2021, universities of applied sciences will jointly start the following measures:

- Reforming curricula
- Introduction of RDI criteria
- Monitoring personnel's expertise in sustainable development and responsibility
- Creating a roadmap to carbon neutrality.

Universities of applied sciences in Finland

Finland has 24 universities of applied sciences with 145,000 students. Half of all students working towards a master's or bachelor's degree are studying in universities of applied sciences.

Universities of applied sciences provide education for professional expert tasks, such as business administrators, engineers, nurses, experts in social services and hospitality management, public health nurses, designers, police officers, construction supervisors, and vocational teachers.

Universities of applied sciences also engage in applied research, development and innovation activities and artistic activities. Nearly 13,000 partner organisations participated in development and application activities in 2017.

UAS in Finland



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Universities of Applied Sciences



29 600

Graduates



882,5 M€

State Funding in 2020



146 000

Students



9750

Staff (FTE)



122 M€ External

RDI-funding in 2019

Source Vipunen, Polamk, Högskolan på Åland



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