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INTRODUCTION

This quality manual describes the most essential contents of VAMK’s quality management and it is available for everyone at VAMK. The manual presents the objectives, functions and actors clearly and in a concrete manner. The action and financial plans, process descriptions and feedback systems, internal audits as well periodic self-assessments and reviews connect the quality system to the HEI’s objectives, activities and resource planning.

With the help of quality management, the quality of professional higher education is enhanced. Quality management refers to the management of functions, planning, anticipation, assessment and continuous improvement to achieve the quality targets.
1. THE CEO’S ADDRESS

Quality management at VAMK aims to make us the Main Partner in Expertise, in accordance with our vision. We wish to do our work well, learn every day and enhance our activities for the good of our students, partners and staff.

When our quality system works well, we can fulfil the tasks appointed to us, education, research, development and innovations activities and regional development. We want to do all this keeping societal impact in mind. The justification of our existence comes out of the work that we do for our region and out of our investment in increasing qualified work force for the regional economic life.

Our values are Openness, Sympathy, Pioneering and Customer-Driven. The values guide our activities and the quality system ensures the quality of all we do. We are a university of applied sciences with a positive attitude towards business sector and working life; therefore, the knowledge of the business environment and dialogue with regional actors are prerequisites for significant activities. Openness creates a good basis for this dialogue and our entire quality system is built on dialogue.

We manage our activities by information but also with heart. We are a sympathetic university of applied sciences where quality is present in everyday activities. It is meeting with people, listening to them and helping them, so that everyone can make their personal best.

Kati Komulainen

President/CEO
2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY POLICY AT VAMK

The vision of VAMK, University of Applied Sciences is to be the Main Partner in Expertise. Our strategy guides our quality management, which is supported by our quality policy and the principles of quality work defined in it.

Our quality policy creates the basis for the quality work we do together. Openness as a value commits us to promote our societal impact and engagement by enhancing our activities in accordance with the principles of Open Science and Research.

The quality policy of VAMK, University of Applied Sciences defines the main principles of the quality system, quality management and organizational culture at VAMK. Our quality policy is implemented through our quality system.

The main principles of the quality work:

- The activities are steered by the strategy, vision, mission and values of the UAS, approved by the Board of the UAS.
- The activities are built on the premises approved by the Board, presented in the action plan and financial plan.
- Quality work is open and continuous interaction with the staff, students and stakeholders. VAMK's staff are committed to our common values and principles in their activities.
- Quality work strengthens the integration of the three tasks (education, applied research and regional development) and our quality system supports the societal impact.
PDCA Model in Quality Work

VAMK’s quality work is based on the PDCA model, which is built on continuous learning, enhancement and problem solving. The quality work is founded on anticipation, analysis and assessment of obtained information as well as continuous enhancement and learning. The agreement made with the Ministry of Education and Culture, our strategy and the strategy of the Ostrobothnia region create the foundation to our quality work. These evolve into our future vision and into action and financial plans for our units and into strategic development projects for the entire UAS. This is manifested to the student as an up-to-date, working life oriented curriculum.

![PDCA Model in Quality Work](image)

FIGURE 1. The Quality System of VAMK, University of Applied Sciences

Responsibilities in Quality Management

The responsibilities in quality management are described in the table below. (Table 1.) Quality management is used to ensure that our activities are in line with our strategy and objectives. With a functional quality management, we have means to take corrective measures at an early stage to be able to achieve the objective to be the Main Partner in Expertise, as stated in our vision and mission.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Board of VAMK</td>
<td>Approves the strategy and quality policy. Authorises the President/CEO to be responsible for quality management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President /CEO</td>
<td>Is responsible for the implementation of the quality policy and for societal impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Team</td>
<td>Deals with the matters brought to the management team before the President’s decision-making. The members of the management team are process owners and are responsible for the development and performance of the processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors of Units</td>
<td>Responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the tasks named in the strategy in their respective units and responsible for the quality and its continuous enhancement in the units. Responsible for the activities, economy, and performance of the unit in accordance with the objectives set by the Management team. Responsible for the planning, implementation and enhancement of education, RDI and international activities so that they meet the needs of the working life in the region, taking into account continuous learning needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Degree Programmes and Heads of Support Services</td>
<td>Responsible for high-quality activities within their own respective areas and the continuous enhancement of these activities; participate actively in the planning of activities and economy; take care of quality management in their areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor teachers</td>
<td>Following up the progress of studies in the group, appraisal discussions, guidance and counselling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairpersons of Internal Audit</td>
<td>Act as Chairpersons of internal audit teams and inform of the results of the audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Responsible for the quality of their own work and its development; comply with agreed operating modes, participate in staff training and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Manager</td>
<td>Comprehensive assessment, enhancement and maintenance of the quality system. Internal and external communication on quality management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamok (student body) and students</td>
<td>Participate in the enhancement of VAMK (management team, emergency group, task groups, representatives in degree programme meetings, use of feedback systems, internal audit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Committees</td>
<td>Enhancement of and cooperation in education, RDI activities and continuous learning. Analysis of operating environment and anticipation of needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation partners in working life and in the region</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Education and Culture</td>
<td>An agreement is made with the Ministry of Education and Culture on the objectives, most important measures, tasks, profile, strengths and new emerging fields, degree targets and on core funding based on these.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The President is responsible for the quality system, supported by the Quality Manager. The Directors of Units have a significant role in quality work. Each member of the community is responsible for carrying out their tasks well according to given instructions.

Our quality system is an entity, which is described on our Intranet. All directives, procedures, processes and systems with which the UAS maintains and enhances the quality of the education, RDI, management, managerial work and enhancement activities are available on the Intranet.

3. EXTERNAL STEERING OF ACTIVITIES

The activities of VAMK, University of Applied Sciences are steered by international agreements signed by Finland, legislation on universities of applied sciences, national higher education policy and steering by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Regionally, our activities are influenced by strategies of the Ostrobothnia region, needs of stakeholders and working life and agreements made with them.

VAMK complies with the principles of and recommendations of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education ESG; Finland has committed to these together with other European states in signing the agreement on the building and enhancement of the European Higher Education Area EHEA. In addition to the principles and recommendations for quality assurance, (The framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area), the ECTS system, recognition of prior learning and the Diploma Supplement have been agreed on.

The Universities of Applied Sciences Act grants an operating licence to the HEI; the Act also decrees on the tasks related to education and research generally. The Act grants the HEI an autonomy and freedom to implement the tasks as it sees best. The Act entails the responsibility of the HEI to maintain, enhance and assess the quality and impact of its activities and to enhance its activities continuously. In the negotiations with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the HEI’s objectives, tasks and measures are agreed on.

The objective of the ESG is student-centred learning and tuition, which means increasing the accessibility and multiformity studies in HEI’s tasks, education and cooperation. By participating in external quality assurance, we will increase the openness of our activities and express our desire to aim for the objectives and quality requirements set for the quality of our education.

International Audit

The coming international audit at will be implemented in March 2021 and will be conducted by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). FINEEC is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is registered as a trustworthy European quality assurance agency in European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).
4. STRATEGIC FOUNDATION

In accordance with our strategy, our objective is to be the Main Partner in Expertise to working life, students, staff and partners in Finland and abroad.

We create added value by being a multi-field HEI. We combine our competencies in Technology, Business Administration, Health Care and Social Services and design to educate future experts, to strengthen the working life in the region and to motivate and encourage our staff and students.

We genuinely want to participate in creating a better tomorrow through education by making a societal impact and engaging in society, following the principles of openness.

VISION

We create a competitive edge for key players in the business sector by coaching future talent and providing a pioneering perspective.

MISSION

CUSTOMER-DRIVEN

We anticipate and know the needs and expectations of both students and the world of work, to which we respond in a solution-oriented and innovative way.

SYMPATHY

We are easily approachable. We trust and respect everyone as a person and work as a team.

OPENNESS

Our openness constructs social dialogue and interaction.

PIONEERING

Together we have the courage to be inspired, inspire others and be creative, we are allowed to experiment. We develop our skills and expertise in a goal- and future-oriented way.

FIGURE 2. VAMK, University of Applied Sciences Strategy
Strategic Enhancement Areas

We have set five strategic enhancement areas with which we can achieve our vision. These areas are described in Figure 3.

1. **Deepening the cooperation with working life**
   **Target:** New type of partnership between the HEI and working life

2. **Increasing the volume and the level of competence in RDI and service activities**
   **Target:** Our RDI and service activities have been enhanced from its present state as a part of national and international

3. **International working and study environment**
   **Target:** Our students have international experience and competence, which is required by export-oriented working life in the area.

4. **Success of students**
   **Target:** Students are satisfied and progress in their studies within normative graduation time.

5. **Enhancing the well-being of staff**
   **Target:** Through the inclusion of the staff and enhancing the community spirit and measures taken in human resource management, we have a healthy, inspired and motivated staff; consequently, our results will improve.

FIGURE 3. Strategic enhancement areas

Societal Impact Part of Quality

At VAMK, societal impact is part of everything we do. It can be seen in education, RDI and regional development. The president/CEO has given a statement on societal impact and societal engagement at university of applied sciences, and every member of the community commits to promote these matters for their own part. An essential part of societal impact is openness of all our activities. Openness is emphasized in matters of science and research; to this end, the President has defined a policy on open organisational culture at VAMK. The areas in which we have societal impact are described in Figure 4. In future, we will devise an indicator to measure the societal impact.
Management by Information as a Tool in Assessment and Anticipation

The achievement of objectives is monitored on three levels at VAMK: The Board of VAMK, Management Team and Head of Units.

We monitor the achievement of the objectives agreed with the Ministry of Education and Culture in the Board and the Management Team four times a year.

Indicators by Strategic Enhancement Areas

Deepening the cooperation with working life in the region

1) Open UAS (credits)
2) Credits completed in Specialisation Programmes (credits)
Increasing the Volume and Competence in RDU and Service Activities

1) Volume of external project funding (€)
2) Number of enterprises involved in RDI projects (number)
3) Publications (number)

International working and study environment

1) Credits completed in international exchange (out) (credits)
2) Credits completed in international exchange (in) (credits)
3) IOL studies (credits)
4) Number of international degree students (number)
5) Preparatory education for immigrants (credits)

Success of students

1) Questions in the Career Monitoring Survey related to the funding model
2) Employment one year after graduation
3) Studies arranged in cooperation between HEIs

Enhancing the well-being of the staff

1) Työyhteisövire- questionnaire on well-being at work (scale 0 – 5)

Indicators approved and followed by the Board

The Board of VAMK monitors the progress of four lagging indicators. The indicators approved and monitored by the Board are:

1) Number of graduates (number)
2) Volume of external project funding (€)
3) Employment of international student in the region after graduation (number)
4) Continuous learning (credits)
5) Economic development (€)

The Management Team monitors the indicators from the viewpoint of the achievement of objectives and resource planning, basing the monitoring on the achievement of the objectives agreed on with the Ministry of Education and Culture and results set for development projects. The indicators have been supplemented with some explanatory indicators.
The indicators monitored the Units are presented in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5. Lagging indicators monitored by the Units.
5. STARTING POINTS FOR OPEN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

VAMK is committed to comply with the principles of Open Science and Research and to strengthen the competence in open operating models. Openness is one of our values. With openness, we wish to engage in open societal discussion and promote our societal impact and engagement.

We have signed the Declaration of Open Science and Research 2020 – 2025, the vision and mission of which are:

- To endorse the strategic goals for open science and research defined by the research community in their own strategies and steering work, with consideration for the characteristics of their organisations;
- To support and encourage the everyday work of their organisation’s members to attain the objectives and goals of the policies;
- To participate actively in the national open science and research coordination activities.

We have committed to comply the Open RDI Activities guidelines (available at seamk.libguides.fi) developed in cooperation in the Open Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) and Open Learning Models at Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences project (available at tt.eduuni.fi).

Open organisational culture applies to every member of our staff, irrespective their job description. We have committed to comply with the principles of open science and research, good scientific practice and research ethics.

Open organisational culture at VAMK is built on common understanding and motivation to act openly and comply with open operating models. The aim is to bring the material and results as well as methods used in RDI projects available for all interested to be utilised.
6. MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The organisation structure at VAMK is low and allows agile enhancement. The Board convenes approximately eight times a year, in accordance with annual planning cycle.

**FIGURE 6. Annual Planning Cycle of the Board of VAMK**

There are four units at VAMK, all of which have an accountable director. In addition, the Director of Administration is responsible for administrative services. The Directors of Units are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the enhancement activities and measures, in accordance with the VAMK strategy in their respective units as well as are responsible for the quality and continuous enhancement of the units. They are responsible for ensuring that the operations, economy and performance of the units are in line with the objectives set by the Management Team. In addition, they are in charge of planning, implementation, assessment and enhancement of the education, RDI activities and international activities in the units so that they meet the requirements of the working life in the region, also considering the continuous learning needs.

The Heads of Degree programmes in educational units are responsible for high-quality activities, and the continuous enhancement of these activities in their respective programmes. They participate actively in the planning of activities and economy and take care of quality management in their respective areas.

Every member of staff is responsible for the quality of their work and for improving the quality based on feedback received.
Our regulations are approved by the Board of the UAS. The regulations define the key roles and responsibilities in management, heeding the stipulation of the University of Applied Sciences Act and the Limited Liability Companies Act.

7. RESOURCE PLANNING AND ECONOMIC CONTROL

We have signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education and Culture that is valid until 2024. Enhancement activities, strategic objectives and their measuring and degree targets have been agreed on in the agreement.

The valid strategy has been approved by the Board. The strategy describes the vision, mission, value and five enhancement areas and the indicators for them. We are moving towards management by information,
and in accordance with the PDCA cycle, we monitor and assess the indicators on various levels. The Board monitors the realisation of the strategy with relation to the objectives agreed on with the MoEC and to the objectives set by the Board itself four times a year, as stated in the annual planning cycle. Similarly, the Management Team monitors the objectives set for the units and objectives set with the MoEC four times a year and take corrective measures, if need be.

FIGURE 8. Annual planning cycle for management

Action and financial planning process is based on the objectives set in the strategy. In the preparation phase, the Management Team makes an operating environment analysis in cooperation with the Ostrobothnia ELY centre and TE offices, taking into account the requirements of regional companies. An external consult is used in estimating the funding. We set indicators and targets for the entire HEI and all units.

In the next phase, the units, under the direction of the Director of the Unit and the Financial Manager, draw up their action plans and budgets in which the enhancement measures and resources, the needs of working life are considered and the future needs are anticipated with relation to the staff.

The action and financial plans of the units are brought together into the VAMK action and financial plan, the person responsible being the President. The initial action and financial plan can be commented on by all members of the UAS. The approval takes place in accordance with the annual planning cycle in the Board meeting. The implementation is monitored four times a year; the action and financial plans are also revisited in unit reviews in autumn and objectives for the next year are set.
8. CORE PROCESSES

Our task at VAMK is to educate experts for working life and support the students’ professional growth.

The RDI activities supporting the education we provide and serving the regional working life is the other core task. Regional enhancement work penetrates all our activities. Special competence in design services are provided by Muova design centre, one of our units. To succeed in these tasks and to lead them towards our mission to create a competitive edge for the working life actors, we need strategic management and resource planning.

![Processes diagram]

FIGURE 9. Core processes at VAMK

A prerequisite for efficient process control is that the process owners have an authority to make decisions concerning the process. At VAMK, the process owners are always directors of unit and members of the Management Team. A person-in-charge has been named for each phase of the process who ensures that all measures required are taken. Those who participate in these measures, as well as those who are notified of them, are named in each phase of the process.

The directors of the Schools of Technology, Business Administration and Health Care and Social Services are the owners both of the educational and RDI processes, which helps them to match the education, RDI activities and working life in versatile ways to enhance the staff’s and students’ competencies. Thus, we can also implement our regional development task.

The core functions of Muova Design Centre are described in the process descriptions of design services, innovation activities and domestic and international projects. The Director of Muova is a member of the Management Team.
The President oversees that the direction of the UAS is towards the set objectives and she is responsible for strategic management of the UAS, international activities, safety and security and quality management. The financial planning and enhancing the competences of the staff are the Director of Administration’s responsibilities.

9. CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT OF ACTIVITIES

The continuous assessment of activities is a prerequisite for continuous enhancement of activities. The assessment is based on the set objectives. The continuous assessment is implemented in accordance with our PDCA cycle but it is a part of our everyday activities.

We assess the quality of our activities, services and enhancement projects in accordance with the annual planning cycle for management. In addition, our staff assess the functionality of the policies and procedures in their work and they are discussed in appraisal discussions and team meetings. The systematic assessment provides tools for management and consistency of decision-making.

The assessment of VAMK’s activities comprise external audit, internal self-assessment, reviews and feedback received through feedback systems. We receive feedback from the students, staff and stakeholders. In addition, we carry out an extensive staff questionnaire once a year. Appraisal discussions are a significant tool to obtain assessment and feedback information. As we move towards a stronger management by information model, we receive feedback on indicators through various channels, as stated in the annual planning cycle. Feedy is a feedback channel for the staff and students through which feedback can be given anonymously. The purpose is to give feedback on feedback as soon as possible.

10. HEI THAT ENHANCES QUALITY AND ACTIVITIES CONTINUOUSLY

The assessment on various levels described above creates a foundation for continuous enhancement of activities.

Activities are enhanced on the organisational level, unit level, degree programme level and individual level. As a community, we are all committed to our strategy and premises defined in our quality policy. Everyone is responsible for the quality of his or her work. Quality is created every day in personal encounters.