

REVIEW EVALUATION GROUP 'S ASSESSMENTS AND PROPOSALS 2024

Composition of the evaluation group

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I GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND FEEDBACK

1. Overview

The evaluation group believes that education and, hence, effective degree programmes, are a strategically vital success factor for the University of Helsinki. The group notes that, by increasing appreciation for the programmes and addressing structural problems in managing the programmes' resources, the University can improve the results and quality of its education.

The group defines enhancing the rate of progression as the key development goal for the University's education. In this respect, it is important that the University define the criteria for the rate of progression so that everyone involved understands the concept in the same way. The group encourages the University to address graduation delays through student guidance and supervision, the enhancement of teaching quality, and support for student wellbeing and the self-regulation of learning. In examining graduation times, it is important to use student feedback and focus the University's own higher education research on university teaching and learning. In addition, removing obstacles to smooth progress and establishing effective mechanisms for thesis completion support the rate of progression at the University.

The key development goals for doctoral education involve completing degrees within the target duration and aligning degree requirements with the imminent doctoral education pilot.

Defining and applying criteria for establishing, merging and terminating degree programmes support the University in managing its programme portfolio.

2. Implementing development areas and measures proposed by the evaluation group

The evaluation group has proposed seven areas of development for the University's bachelor's and master's programmes, and four for the doctoral programmes. These areas encompass a total of 39 measures to be taken.

The group is aware that the responsibility for initiating and continuing development lies both with degree programmes, departments, discipline-specific units and faculties, and with the University leadership. However, the group does not wish to identify any one person or unit responsible for a specific development area, as the responsibility for operational development is in many cases shared. In addition, the group understands that the development areas are emphasised in different ways across the University degree programmes and faculties, which means that the programmes' own analysis is also important for implementing the measures.

Crucially, the development areas must be prioritised and scheduled through University-wide collaboration

3. Developing the quality management system (annual follow-up and review) of degree programmes

The University of Helsinki should support and further develop the model used in the review, which examined not only individual programmes based on their needs and context but also the University-level education framework (programme portfolio). This can also improve access to information on the status and viability of the education portfolio as a whole.

As an assessment method, the University's annual follow-up and review raises the question of whether the same system can serve both monitoring by the leadership (commensurability) and development within the degree programmes. Moreover, it may be asked whether these practices aim to support the University's quality culture or increase operational management.

The annual follow-up and review of degree programmes could be incorporated more clearly into the practices that support the University's quality culture without linking them with operational management and efficiency. However, this requires engaging the programmes in the University's actual operational and planning processes.

From the perspective of developing the University's quality culture, it is important to focus on the content, readability and scope of the documentation of the annual follow-up and review. Short reports may be understandable to the programmes themselves, but not necessarily to readers outside the programme steering group in the University's senior leadership or the review evaluation group.

The quality or PDCA cycle (Plan – Do – Check – Act) must be strengthened to ensure development follows assessment. The development of degree programmes must be supported systematically.

Degree programmes and faculties can use the traffic light assessments as a monitoring tool. The significance of the traffic lights varies between programmes, faculties and even at the University level, so they cannot be used to draw conclusions on the status of programmes.

In future, student feedback could be used as supplementary review material.

Future reviews should also produce feedback for specific degree programmes and faculties, which the evaluation group believes can be done based on the annual follow-up and review data.

II EVALUATION GROUP VIEWS BY TOPIC

NOTE: The evaluation group provided an overall assessment with regard to each topic using the following system of traffic lights:

GREEN LIGHT No issues

AMBER LIGHT Challenges identified and development underway

RED LIGHT Significant measures required/development areas not yet specified

1. Effectiveness of admissions

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Admissions are generally considered fairly or at least sufficiently effective. Some programmes are aware of problems involving high applicant numbers.

When assessing admissions based on the review data, it seems that study paths and the education system as a whole are inadequately understood. The risk is that this results in partial optimisation, considering especially the national target of increasing education levels and the shrinking of cohorts.

The expansion of certificate-based admissions and the use of national joint application procedures have curtailed the autonomy of universities in admissions. This may be connected with student motivation issues. The number of students pursuing a second degree appears to be significant.

Doctoral programmes

GREEN LIGHT

The number of competent doctoral programme applicants with high-quality research plans appears mostly sufficient. However, some doctoral programmes have too few applicants, whereas intake numbers to doctoral education should be increased in other fields.

As a rule, admissions to doctoral programmes are considered effective. Development needs for application processes and salaried positions are mentioned in some comments, but individual fields may have their own needs.

2. Effectiveness of curricula

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Curriculum design is at the core of academic work. The overall impression of the University's degree programmes is one of continuous development controlled by the programme steering groups. The results of the programmes' traffic light assessments indicate that development work is extensive. Efforts to identify and address problems are commendable. Degree programmes appear to have sufficient autonomy in developing their curricula.

Challenges identified at the University relate to student progress, the teaching offered and the clarity of study paths. Other challenging issues include the number of and languages used in degree programmes, and

collaboration between them. For the programmes, language issues pose challenges for the provision of education, particularly when the needs of different languages (Finnish, Swedish and English) must be taken into account. In addition, a significant number of teaching staff are not proficient in the official languages of Finland (Finnish and Swedish).

The potential problems on horizontal transfer go unexamined in the review. Some faculties mention the use of model timetables, whose extended use could help students manage their study paths.

Although there is broad satisfaction with curricula, they often play a role in the challenging issues of obstacles to student progress and inadequate teaching resources. Accordingly, the effectiveness of curricula must be assessed in relation to such progress as well as in terms of resources. Faculties and degree programmes differ in the extent to which they have identified the causes of and solutions to these challenges and taken appropriate measures.

Doctoral programmes

AMBER LIGHT

The staff of doctoral programmes are satisfied with curricula, which are clearly flexible, enabling various study paths. The lack of teaching provision required for doctoral education has been reported in several fields. The doctoral education pilot will influence curricula by requiring their further development.

3. Effectiveness of student guidance and supervision

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

In the University-level review, student guidance and supervision have been assigned a red light, that is, they are considered matters that clearly require measures to be taken. However, no red light has been assigned at the degree programme level, likely as a result of student guidance and supervision lying at the core of academic work and being taken seriously and developed in all programmes.

Commendably, problems have generally been recognised, as has the need to increase training for guidance and supervision providers. The University's own guidance and supervision model has been introduced at several faculties, but the process remains unfinished at many others.

As guidance and supervision problems are often specific to each discipline, this goes for solutions too. Faculties and degree programmes differ in the extent to which they have identified solutions to these challenges and taken appropriate measures.

Weaknesses in student guidance and supervision have been noted between the first year of bachelor's studies and master's theses, with the transition from bachelor's to master's programmes identified as a particular challenge. Guidance and supervision responsibilities must be divided more equally, and multiprofessional approaches must be developed.

Doctoral programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Support, guidance and supervision available through research groups appear effective, as do thesis committees in multiple fields. In some fields, however, the committee operations are considered somewhat unclear. Thessa is a successful supervision support system in several fields, but cannot support everyone adequately.

Supervisor training is widely needed, and good supervision practices should be shared. The unequal distribution of supervision responsibilities should be addressed, and the commitment of supervisors should be strengthened.

The doctoral education pilot will challenge the supervision practices of doctoral programmes and necessitate the development of supervision.

4. Transition stage from bachelor's to master's programme

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Degree programmes do not usually pay attention to the transition stage as a separate theme. It is referred to implicitly, for example, by noting that a master's programme successfully welcomes students from bachelor's programmes, elsewhere in Finland or abroad. From the perspective of master's programmes, students with different educational backgrounds have different guidance and supervision needs.

Problems are explained with external factors: school language choices, misconceptions about disciplines or the small number of students studying mathematics and science at school. The effectiveness of horizontal transfers (within degrees or otherwise) is scarcely considered.

Whereas the transition stage plays a minor role in fields preparing students directly for specific professions, guidance and support in other fields clearly require further development. When students graduating from a bachelor's programme can choose between several master's programmes, their appeal differs, necessitating both guidance and the management of practices.

Although this section was excluded from the review of doctoral programmes, comments were received from some faculties. The University is yet to identify a clear path from master's to doctoral programmes. This deserves further development. In some fields, few students make the transition from master's to doctoral programmes, possibly because of external employment acting as a pull factor.

5. Rate of progression

Bachelor's and master's programmes

RED LIGHT

Delays in graduation are a challenge at most faculties, particularly the large ones. Key factors for resolving this challenge are the continuous development of guidance, supervision and teaching quality as well as support for students in regulating their learning. In addition, student wellbeing and mental health should be supported.

The University should elaborate on the definition of and criteria for the rate of progression. A key question is whether this rate is judged against the indicators used in the funding model, making it easy to identify a good situation, or whether degree programmes can use their discretion in defining, for example, learning outcomes and the quality of degrees. When determining the rate of progression, the quantitative perspective could be supplemented with a qualitative approach based on smooth student progress. Moreover, common criteria should be defined for green, amber and red lights in this respect. To date, faculties have assessed their own operations in different ways, and clear delays have in some cases been seen as a fairly good result.

In some faculties, thesis work constitutes a bottleneck, requiring the development of supervision processes. Attention should also be paid to sufficient course provision and the even distribution of the student workload.

Review of degree programmes at the University of Helsinki

Review evaluation group
Päivi Aronen

15 May 2024

The capacity of degree programmes to attract and retain students should be assessed critically. Some programmes have too few applicants, and others are considered too broad-based and fragmented. In addition, more attention should be given to the appropriate alignment of bachelor's and master's programmes as well as guidance at the transition stage.

A permanent conflict exists between full-time study (incl. student financial aid enabling it) and student employment and delays in study. It is also clear that a master's degree will be behind schedule if the corresponding bachelor's degree is delayed. It is difficult to enable the flexible completion of master's studies alongside bachelor's studies without delaying graduation for the bachelor's degree.

Studying according to a set schedule boosts graduation at some faculties. Non-Finnish students liable for tuition fees seem to graduate in due course.

If combined with student register data, information obtained from feedback systems (e.g., HowULearn) could be used to identify factors that promote and slow down studies, thus helping to identify means of promoting the rate of progression.

Doctoral programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Graduation within the target duration of four years is a challenge at several faculties. In doctoral programmes, delays are caused by the slow preliminary examination and finalisation processes.

In terms of their financial position, doctoral researchers are a heterogeneous group, which means measures supporting smooth progress may differ, depending on the form of funding used. Graduation may take a long time, particularly for those writing their thesis while working.

The doctoral education pilot launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture is increasing pressure to examine the scope and requirements of doctoral education.

As the quality of doctoral supervision appears to vary, and the improvement of supervision skills was widely seen as necessary, supervisor training warrants more attention.

6. Effectiveness of management, leadership and communication

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

The disparity between responsibility and power is a clear challenge in the management of degree programmes.

The evaluation group paid attention to how management, leadership and communication have been considered to be separate issues in annual follow-up and the review. However, many of the problems highlighted by degree programmes and faculties are ultimately associated with management and leadership, including the lack or uneven distribution of teaching resources, participation in the recruitment of teaching and research staff, or challenges in student guidance and supervision.

The results indicate a high level of satisfaction with degree programme management. The programme directors and steering groups are committed, and collaboration is effective. Duties appear to be divided evenly in steering groups. As some faculties have failed in engaging students in the groups, the role of students should be clarified.

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Interaction between the groups and disciplines as well as teachers and other coordinating staff is not altogether effective at all faculties. Concerted efforts should be made to increase communication and collaboration.

Challenges in management, leadership and organisation have been identified in programmes coordinated by multiple faculties.

Doctoral programmes

AMBER LIGHT

The steering groups of doctoral programmes function well and are committed to developing the programmes.

In specific instances, interaction between the programme leadership and doctoral thesis supervisors is seen as requiring development.

The same is true of communication aimed at doctoral researchers, supervisors and other stakeholders.

7. Effectiveness of teaching resources

Bachelor's and master's programmes

RED LIGHT

In many cases, teaching resources are seen as insufficient and unevenly distributed. As the responsibility for providing teaching lies with degree programmes, whereas the resources are held by departments, the organisation of education requires seamless collaboration between the programmes and departments.

Scarce teaching resources lead to staff fatigue and a sense of being pressed for time. It is important to identify and employ methods for ensuring sufficient and evenly distributed teaching resources in degree programmes.

However, it must also be recognised that the University of Helsinki's student-teacher ratio is among the best in Finland, so the more effective use of the available resources should be scrutinised. Most of the resource-related challenges appear to involve allocation, in other words, management and leadership rather than just money.

Although the deficiencies and problems regarding the teaching resources of degree programmes and faculties have been clear for years, no solutions have been found. The University should critically consider whether there is a genuine willingness to do something about the matter or whether the existing situation should be accepted. The need for and actual use of teaching resources should be regularly monitored and assessed, and ways to monitor teacher workloads and the distribution of duties should be developed. This should be done through collaboration between faculties and degree programmes.

Staff are concerned about future teaching resources, following, for example, the retirement of some employees and the expected increase in student numbers. Potential solutions identified by faculties include the use of students and doctoral researchers in teaching, the more efficient utilisation of hourly paid teachers, collaborative teaching, and better opportunities for degree programmes to influence recruitment. However, development and administrative duties are often allocated to staff proficient in Finnish, leading to uneven workloads.

Collaboration in teaching between disciplines and degree programmes has been developed, but has also been identified in many instances as an area requiring further development.

Doctoral programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Teaching resources appear to be better in doctoral than bachelor's and master's programmes. However, teachers are often committed only to teaching their own courses rather than developing degree programmes more comprehensively. In certain cases, the poor commitment of teachers to teaching in doctoral programmes is considered challenging.

8. Opportunities to influence recruitment

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Opportunities to influence staff recruitment are often seen as limited, but in some cases degree programme staff have been included in HR planning, and programme directors in teacher recruitment. However, many challenges have been identified in these areas, especially at large faculties.

It appears that teaching merits are emphasised more than before, which is seen as a welcome development. Communication, interaction and collaboration between degree programmes and departments should be ensured in recruitment processes, which should also be transparent.

Doctoral programmes

GREEN LIGHT

Although the opportunities of doctoral programmes to influence the recruitment of teaching and research staff are limited, the data indicate that this is not considered a significant problem.

9. Effectiveness of equipment and facility resources

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Facilities are mostly fit-for-purpose and do not constitute significant bottlenecks or problems for teaching.

The development of hybrid teaching and audiovisual technology are challenging, as few facilities appear suited to, in particular, remote and hybrid teaching. It has proved (understandably) impossible to upgrade all University facilities simultaneously to meet the same technical requirements.

Teachers are still struggling with hybrid teaching and, more generally, with the need to strike a balance between on-campus teaching and online teaching after the pandemic.

Doctoral programmes

AMBER LIGHT

For doctoral education, facilities do not generally pose major problems. Key research infrastructures must be ensured in each discipline, particularly as the volume of doctoral education increases.

10. Effectiveness of joint programmes

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

In general, collaboration between faculties is effective, particularly in bachelor's programmes.

More challenges have been identified at the master's level, and they are particularly evident in collaboration involving other universities with different decision-making models and processes.

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Attention must be paid to faculty incentives and the flow of information between faculties in joint programmes. An essential development area for joint programmes relates to planning and agreeing on teaching resources for a sufficiently long term.

Doctoral programmes

GREEN LIGHT

Collaboration is mostly considered effective, although the formal requirements for doctoral theses could be harmonised between faculties.

11. Status of degree programmes at the University

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

The status of degree programmes has developed positively and is now generally considered good. Most programmes have their own specific identity, which enables their development and a distinct profile.

In contrast, the practical management of a degree programme is a demanding task based on the matrix management structure, which comes with high expectations and relatively little power, particularly over resources. In this respect, the status of the programmes and their directors should be clarified in the University and faculty organisation. The University structures and resource management are somewhat unclear in terms of degree programmes and do not bolster effective management to support programme operations and the allocation of teaching resources. Teachers' supervisors are not linked to the programme structure, and teachers' work plans are drawn up separately from the programmes. Consequently, the management of teaching resources must be enhanced.

Doctoral programmes

GREEN LIGHT

The status of doctoral programmes is considered strong and fairly problem-free. This can be partly attributed to the programmes operating with their own appropriations.

12. Overall effectiveness of education at present

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Overall, education is seen as effective, although the status of programmes in the broad programme portfolio varies considerably in terms of factors such as appeal, the rate of progression and employment prospects.

Important development areas for the University include the rate of progression (student progress) and the promotion of employment, particularly for international students.

The University should support and further develop the model used in the review, which examined not only individual programmes based on their needs and context but also the University-level education framework (programme portfolio). This can also improve access to information on the status and viability of the education portfolio as a whole.

At the level of master's programmes, the portfolio approach or clear profiles for programmes or major subject options could be further developed so that students (applicants) can better understand the profile and core of the various options.

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Doctoral programmes

AMBER LIGHT

Although overall effectiveness is good, the programme portfolio approach involves development opportunities as well. Could closer collaboration or even the merger of programmes bring benefits for programme leadership and coordination?

The increasing number of doctoral students leads to questions about new collaboration opportunities within the University and between universities.

The University's doctoral education is based on multiple needs and expectations. In some fields, doctoral education can be structured in a school-like manner, in which case effective recruitment is key. In other fields, recruitment may be based on the interests of master's graduates, personal grants, research groups or research projects. The further development of the new University of Helsinki Doctoral School relies on acknowledging and managing the versatility of doctoral education.

13. Overall effectiveness of education five years from now

Bachelor's and master's programmes

AMBER LIGHT

The University has the potential and confidence required for positive development in bachelor's and master's education. The crucial issue is how the University succeeds in planning teaching resources and strengthening collaboration.

On the other hand, as securing government funding for education will be challenging in the coming years, it is important to proactively recognise ways of dealing with even the more difficult scenarios.

Doctoral programmes

GREEN LIGHT

In doctoral education, prospects for the near future are believed to be fairly positive.

III EVALUATION GROUP PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT AREAS AND MEASURES

I Seamless studies	
Bachelor's and master's programmes	Doctoral programmes
<p><u>Development area 1</u> Management of study paths, transition stages and horizontal transfers</p> <p>Measures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Degree programmes will include model templates in their curricula to give students a better overview of the education system, study paths and the teaching offered. 2. The University will develop and clarify horizontal transfers within and between programmes to ensure they support student choices and progress. 3. The seamless transition from bachelor's to master's programmes will be ensured with guidance and supervision through inter-programme collaboration. 4. The University will develop a strategic vision for what continuous learning it will provide and why. <p><u>Development area 2</u> Definition of and criteria for the rate of progression at the University, as well as means to prevent graduation delays</p> <p>Measures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The University will define the rate of progression, including its criteria, based on not only the Ministry of Education and Culture funding model, but also operational quality and performance. 6. Degree programmes will address graduation delays through student guidance and supervision, the continuous enhancement of teaching quality, and support for student wellbeing and the self-regulation of learning. 7. Degree programmes will develop effective mechanisms for supporting thesis completion based on good practices used across the University. 8. The Centre for University Teaching and Learning (HYPE) will investigate areas of development in University education, with the results supporting degree programme development. 9. In monitoring student progress, degree programmes will use the information obtained from all student feedback systems. 	<p><u>Development area 1</u> Completion of doctoral degrees within the target duration</p> <p>Measures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doctoral programmes will redesign their curricula so that doctoral degrees can be completed within the target duration. 2. The amount, content and role of course-based teaching in doctoral degrees must be examined critically and based on data from comparable countries. 3. As the number of doctoral researchers increases, collaboration between doctoral programmes will support effective doctoral education. 4. With the variation in supervision practices, supervisor training could be targeted to the doctoral programmes that have already identified this as a problem. 5. As the volume of doctoral researchers grows, the University will develop supervision practices, including peer support and supervision. <p><u>Development area 2</u> The transition stage from master's to doctoral studies</p> <p>Measure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. It is recommended that practices supporting recruitment to doctoral education be planned in each field through collaboration between doctoral and master's programmes.

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<p>10. Degree programmes will critically examine their capacity to attract and retain students if they have too few applicants or a poor rate of progression. They will then take appropriate measures to improve the situation.</p>	
<p>II Overall structure, management, teaching resources and status of degree programmes</p>	
<p>Bachelor's and master's programmes</p>	<p>Doctoral programmes</p>
<p><u>Development area 3</u> Management of degree programmes as the University's strategic duty</p> <p>Measures</p> <p>11. The University will strengthen the status of degree programmes by involving them in the University's management and strategic planning forums and processes.</p> <p>12. The University will increase appreciation for the programmes by making their leadership an attractive role.</p> <p>13. The University will give the programmes power and responsibility for operations and resource allocation by reorganising structures and operational processes.</p> <p>14. In the management of joint programmes, the University and the faculties will ensure an efficient flow of information and commitment to offering teaching resources for a sufficiently long time.</p> <p><u>Development area 4</u> Comprehensive control of teaching resources for degree programme needs</p> <p>Measures</p> <p>15. The University will resolve the structural problem hindering the conditions required by degree programme operations, namely, their separation from resources.</p> <p>16. The University will address, through management measures, the problems of teaching resources and resolve the problems identified so far.</p> <p>17. The University will establish norms and develop methods to monitor teacher workloads and the distribution of duties, taking into account the provision of different types of teaching.</p> <p>18. The University will regularly monitor and assess the need for and implementation of teaching resources.</p> <p>19. The University will boost the appreciation of teaching to increase the appeal of teaching roles. At the same time, it will promote a more even distribution of teaching duties among staff.</p>	<p><u>Development area 3</u> Consolidating the new doctoral school structure</p> <p>Measure</p> <p>7. The University will continue to develop practices and procedures for its single doctoral school, taking into account the versatility of doctoral education and field-specific starting points.</p>

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III Overall effectiveness of education	
Bachelor's and master's programmes	Doctoral programmes
<p><u>Development area 5</u> Languages of degree programmes and strategic significance of international programmes</p> <p>Measures</p> <p>20. The University will clarify and elaborate on the strategic significance of its international English-language degree programmes.</p> <p>21. The University will decide on the opportunities and responsibilities of its international staff in learning the official languages of Finland (Finnish and Swedish).</p> <p>22. The University will review the effectiveness of practices in multilingual master's programmes.</p> <p>23. The University will promote the employment of international students in Finland.</p> <p><u>Development area 6</u> Establishing and terminating degree programmes as the University's strategic choices</p> <p>Measures</p> <p>24. The University will develop a strategic planning practice for recognising the need for a new degree programme, taking into account programme funding.</p> <p>25. The University will begin to use the merger and termination of degree programmes as strategic tools.</p> <p>26. The University will decide on criteria for establishing and terminating degree programmes.</p> <p><u>Development area 7</u> Developing the degree programme portfolio comprehensively</p> <p>Measures</p> <p>27. The University will continuously monitor the capacity of degree programmes to attract and retain students and will adjust programmes and the programme portfolio as necessary if the number of applicants is insufficient or if a programme is considered too broad-based, fragmented or otherwise operationally challenging.</p> <p>28. The University will regularly review its programme portfolio and assess, for example, whether it has too many or too few programmes or master's programme options for bachelor's</p>	<p><u>Development area 4</u> Developing the doctoral programme portfolio comprehensively</p> <p>Measures</p> <p>8. By increasing collaboration between doctoral programmes and possibly merging programmes, the University can offer doctoral researchers more multidisciplinary research environments and support the leadership and coordination of programmes.</p> <p>9. As the number of doctoral researchers is set to increase, it is necessary to explore collaboration opportunities between the programmes within the University and with other universities.</p>

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graduates, whether the fields of education are relevant and whether the portfolio content is overlapping.

29. The University will develop the distinct profiles of its master's programmes so that applicants can better recognise different alternatives.

30. It is recommended at the University that proactive scenarios and a range of means be prepared for the next eight to 10 years to develop the programme portfolio, considering current public finances and the international operating environment.