

Audit of Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology LUT

4.4 Continuous learning

Continuous learning is strategically recognised and connected to work life and degree education

Continuous learning is strategically recognised at LUT University and is operationally established. In the Self-Assessment Report, continuous learning is described as a shared priority for LUT University and LAB University of Applied Sciences. It is linked to the needs of work life, companies, alumni, adult learners, open university students, and learners seeking more flexible educational pathways. The joint LUT Universities action plan also includes a financial target for fee-based training, excluding open university education. This indicates that continuous learning is not treated as an isolated activity, but as an integral component of the broader strategic direction of LUT and LAB.

The audit team found several strengths in how continuous learning is connected to degree education and work life. Open university courses are based on LUT's degree education and are planned in connection with degree programme curriculum development. Heads of degree programmes decide which open university courses are offered, using information such as previous registration rates and popular trends. This creates a clear link between open university provision and degree education. In customised continuing education, the planning starts from client and participant needs, and the provision is developed in cooperation with schools, lecturers, companies, and the continuing education team. This supports the relevance of the provision for work life.

LUT would benefit from clarifying its university-level objectives and KPIs for continuous learning. Based on the available evidence, there are some financial growth targets and some operational indicators, such as revenue, profitability, credits, student feedback, and applicants, enrolled students, and graduates in work-compatible master's programmes. The university-level objectives could also include non-financial goals, such as accessibility, learner benefits, target-group reach, quality, or wider impact.

Continuous learning planning would benefit from clearer portfolio-level documentation

LUT's planning of continuous learning appears flexible and responsive. The SAR describes that continuing education is planned by the Study Services continuous education team in collaboration with schools, following national provisions and considering different target groups. The planning also includes benchmarking against other universities, competitors, and private operators. Target groups include alumni, companies, managers, supervisors, experts, and adult learners in work life. Their needs are identified through company visits, training sessions, and needs assessments.

The audit visit confirmed this needs-based approach. Interviewees explained that company-specific training is planned with clients and lecturers, and that the university considers what companies and individuals need.

The visit also showed that open university provision is used as a pathway into degree education and that open university studies follow the same rules as regular degree programmes. Interviewees described open university courses as relatively flexible and consistent across the university, while also noting competition for the same students in the Finnish continuous learning market.

The implementation of continuing education also includes several elements that support adult learners. Customised training may be ECTS-based, and it is developed through joint meetings with clients to clarify objectives and participant backgrounds. Participants may complete a pre-training survey to map their skill levels, expectations, and learning needs. Continuing education uses lectures, group exercises, practical assignments, pass/fail or 0–5 assessment, and some self-paced online courses. Taken together, these elements suggest that LUT has practical ways to adapt provision to the professional context of learners.

However, planning would benefit from clearer portfolio-level documentation. While roles, inputs, and project-level steps are described, there is no clear end-to-end view of how the continuous learning portfolio is reviewed, how often, by which criteria, and with what outputs. The approval process for portfolio-level decisions is also only partly visible. LUT would benefit from more clearly documenting the planning cycle, criteria, outputs, responsibilities, and how “national provisions” are interpreted and applied.

Learning design and feedback practices in continuous learning are active, with room to strengthen closed-loop evidence

The audit material shows that LUT has a clear pedagogical expectation that learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment should be aligned. This is visible in the general quality management of education and in the way continuing education is described. Most continuing education modules are ECTS-based, and the common assessment method is a practical assignment, which allows participants to apply their learning to their own work or organisation. Open university courses are implemented as part of degree programme course delivery, which means they benefit from the quality assurance practices of degree education.

The audit team also found evidence of an active feedback culture in continuous learning. The SAR states that course- and programme-specific feedback is reviewed after each training session by the responsible project team and shared with instructors. Feedback is used for immediate improvements and for planning future iterations. Informal feedback from training sessions and client interactions is also used, and development ideas are collected from instructors, companies, stakeholders, and needs assessments.

The visit provided concrete oral examples of this practice. Interviewees explained that feedback from courses and programmes is regularly discussed with lecturers. They also gave examples of feedback leading to changes, such as not using a lecturer again if feedback is weak, revising content when a programme is repeated, and using competence mapping in a company training programme for managers and directors. These examples indicate that feedback is discussed and used in practice. At the same time, LUT could document feedback-to-action more clearly, including the feedback or evaluation basis, the adjustment made, and any follow-up evidence.

Overall, LUT would benefit from making the continuous learning development cycle more visible. This could include a clearer KPI and reporting framework, better documentation of feedback-to-action, and more consistent evidence of how quality, learner needs, and outcomes are monitored beyond financial and volume indicators. This would help demonstrate not only that continuous learning is active and relevant, but also that its objectives, planning, implementation, and improvement are systematically led and followed up across all forms of continuous learning provision.