

Audit of Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology LUT

3.4 Organisational and feedback culture

LUT's organisational culture is inclusive and open

According to the Self-Assessment Report, LUT's organisational culture is highly inclusive and open, characterised by low hierarchy, approachability, and a strong sense of trust among staff and students. This assessment was echoed in the staff workshop, where participants emphasised the low hierarchy and informality, along with an open atmosphere and a supportive culture of collegiality. According to staff, well-being at work is valued at LUT, and the level of engagement within the community is high. LUT was seen as an appealing and agile university that is adaptive to change and able to effectively adjust its operations and strategy. The rector described culture as the most powerful tool for driving growth and change at LUT, while the University Board characterised it as distinctive, flexible, fast-moving, and similar to a dynamic company. The community exhibits a strong "can-do" entrepreneurial attitude, which allows the institution to adapt rapidly to changes in the operating environment and foster innovation.

LUT uses surveys to understand where the university currently stands in terms of culture and where they should be. According to management, many steps in culture development have been taken, but further steps and continuous development is needed. There is also a leadership development programme supporting cultural change. A One LUT approach and common strategy for all despite multiple locations was highlighted especially in the leadership interviews. Actions in One LUT strategic action plan focuses particularly on improving leadership, community spirit and well-being.

As the university undergoes significant multi-campus growth across Lappeenranta, Lahti, Kouvola, and Mikkeli, communication and the establishment of unified practices occasionally remain challenging. While the university makes effective use of platforms such as the intranet, eLUT, and the Tuudo app, both staff and students have noted that major administrative decisions, such as the reform of bachelor's level education and the relocation of certain programmes to Lahti, have at times been implemented without sufficient prior consultation. It was also noted in the staff workshop that the use of multiple communication channels in parallel may create confusion, particularly among international members, and can lead to information being scattered. In terms of multiple campuses, staff also highlighted the ongoing challenge of balancing activities and resources across campuses to avoid siloed operations and to genuinely foster a "One LUT" culture, supported by both formal and informal face-to-face interactions.

For students, student organisations are important part of university culture. Student guilds and the Student Union (LTKY) are highly active and collaborate closely with the university administration. Student community is a clear strength and important resource for the whole university. The university also organises, for example, welcoming events, induction week, team building activities, and excursions to help students find new friends and develop social networks with students outside their study programme

Staff, students, and external stakeholders are well-represented in formal decision-making bodies, including the University Collegium, Academic Councils, and the University Board. The university systematically involves

external stakeholders through the Advisory Board, programme-specific corporate advisory boards, and the newly established System Earth Collegium. External stakeholders report that their dialogue with the university is regular, fruitful, and appropriately informal. All in all, staff, students and external stakeholders participate in and have opportunities to influence the planning and development of the HEI's activities.

However, some students indicated during the audit visit that their opportunities to influence decision-making are limited, particularly in forums where they are not directly represented. This concern relates both to the early preparatory stages of curriculum development, where key decisions are made, and to later stages in Academic Councils, where programmes are often already largely finalised, leaving limited scope for student input. Some students also expressed a desire for stronger representation at the highest levels, including the addition of a second student seat on the University Board.

LUT should improve course feedback response rate and feedback to students on their feedback

LUT possesses a comprehensive student feedback system as mentioned above. Feedback is systematically processed in annual degree programme quality workshops, where programme heads, teachers, and student guild representatives collaboratively review results and plan improvements, and in management annual reviews. LUT has systematically monitored student feedback as an indicator of teaching quality. Trend data show improvements in student feedback, particularly in the National Bachelor's Survey, where LUT students consistently rated overall satisfaction and opportunities to influence their education highly (4.0 out of 5). This provides one example of the effectiveness of quality improvements at LUT.

Despite these well-established structures, response rates for course feedback remain relatively low (30–40%) as also noted in the SAR. While this is a common challenge across many higher education institutions, improving participation is particularly critical for LUT, where student feedback plays a central role in the quality management system. Low response rates risk introducing bias, weakening the reliability of the data, and limiting its usefulness for course-level enhancement.

As discussed above, discussions with students during the audit workshops suggest that the extent to which feedback leads to meaningful change varies considerably between teachers. While some teachers respond promptly and adjust their courses based on feedback, others are perceived as not addressing it at all. As a result, students reported that course feedback does not consistently translate into visible improvements in teaching. At the same time, leadership interviews indicate that courses with an average feedback score below 3.3 do trigger follow-up discussions with the responsible teacher, pointing to a formal mechanism for quality intervention that may not always be visible to students.

A critical gap identified by students was the lack of feedback-on-feedback. Based on the discussions, students are rarely informed about what changes were made based on their suggestions. Some students also expressed a wish for feedback mechanisms to extend to teaching assistants. According to LUT's intranet, feedback on courses should be provided through the same platform used to collect course feedback. The intranet offers clear guidance for teachers on how and when to provide such responses in the platform. However, in practice, providing feedback-on-feedback still appears to be voluntary. This is further reflected in monitoring data from annual feedback reviews, which indicate that the practice is not yet implemented consistently across courses.

LUT would benefit from presenting feedback-to-action more explicitly, including the feedback source, the decision or action taken, and any follow-up on effect. Beyond informing students about actions taken in response to their feedback, this issue is important because the SAR recognises that much student-driven development occurs informally, for instance, through conversations after lectures or direct email exchanges. Informal feedback can be valuable, but it may be difficult to trace unless it is captured and followed up systematically. LUT would benefit from better ways to collect informal feedback, include it in

visible quality processes, and communicate to students and staff what actions have been taken. Strengthening these processes would help improve student motivation to provide feedback and increase response rates in course feedback.