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The evaluation of higher education in social and health care

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The evaluation of higher education in social and health care was carried out between 2020 and 2021 and it focused on the educational provision in higher education in the field of social and health care in universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS). Special attention was paid to the competence produced by the degrees and their relevance to working life and higher education, and on continuous learning. The evaluation questions were:

- What competences does higher education in social and health care produce in relation to future competence needs?
- What is the working-life relevance of higher education in social and health care?
- How relevant are the places of traineeship in social and health care and the working-life partners from the point of view of higher education?
- How do the structures, content and practices of continuous learning ensure the development of competence in social and health care in the future?

A wide range of data was used in the evaluation: feedback surveys, such as material from the Finnish Bachelor's Graduate Survey, the UAS Graduate Feedback Questionnaire AVOP (bachelor's, master's) and career monitoring surveys, degree programmes' self-assessment survey, focus group interviews with representatives of higher education institutions (HEIs) and working life, and material from student workshops. In addition, preliminary conclusions and recommendations were also discussed at the stakeholder webinar. The results of the webinar also served as evaluation material.

Based on the evaluation, the **key strengths** of higher education in social and health care are:

- Higher education in social and health care is offered in all parts of Finland and many degree programmes are available.
- Higher education in social and health care produces wide-ranging competence.

- The working-life relevance of higher education in social and health care is good and it is supported in different ways in the degree programmes. The most important methods of implementing the working-life relevance of higher education in social and health care are the traineeships and the participation of working life representatives in the curriculum work.
- Continuous learning is offered diversely in the field of social and health care, and many different options for developing one's own competence are available.

**The key recommendations** for higher education in social and health care are:

- The provision of education in social and health care should be coordinated at the national level and agree the responsibilities of different HEIs. Transitions between the two higher education sectors and access to doctoral programmes for those with a UAS master's degree should also be promoted.
- Higher education institutions and actors in working life must work in cooperation to promote the development of students' generic competences and their specialised competences in social and health care, such as ethical competence, digital competence, multiprofessional and multidisciplinary competence, international competence and competence in sustainable development.
- The degree programmes in social and health care must be implemented in an even more working-life oriented and customer-oriented manner, paying attention to the current phenomena in society.
- Alongside project-bound forms of cooperation, the permanent cooperation structures of social and health care must be strengthened and developed in a cross-cutting manner within and between higher education institutions and together with workplaces.

**Keywords:** continuous learning, competence, educational provision, evaluation, higher education institutions, social and health care, universities of applied sciences, working-live relevance, universities.